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**Active Government, Active Communities: How Government Social
Programs Affect Volunteerism and Philanthropy in Helping the Poor**

by

Alan B. Beck

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Political Science in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New
York.

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ABSTRACT

Active Government, Active Communities: How Government Social Programs Affect Volunteerism and Philanthropy in Helping the Poor

by

Alan B. Beck

Advisor: Professor Frances Fox Piven

Much recent public policy in the United States, most notably the Personal Responsibility Act of 1996, has been driven by a commonly assumed inverse relationship between government activism on social welfare and private voluntary action to help people who are poor. It is widely believed that government programs “crowd out” volunteerism by causing people to come to rely on government as the central source of poor relief. Conservatives who support this belief argue that reducing government welfare will lead to an outpouring of private voluntary initiative to help the poor. This dissertation challenges this belief.

First, a survey of over 400 volunteers in New York City working in programs to assist people who are poor, and interviews with over 40 volunteer program administrators, reveals that proponents of the “crowding out” theory are mistaken about volunteers’ motivations, and that what is likely to dampen people’s desire to volunteer is not government involvement in welfare, but government and politicians communicating--through policy and rhetoric--a message that blames people who are poor for their own predicaments.

An analysis of historical statistical data on private philanthropy and government social welfare confirms that government activism on social welfare tends to foster, rather than to “crowd out,” growth in private giving to organizations that assist people in poverty. Most noteworthy, the intense anti-welfare rhetoric surrounding the 1980 and 1994 election campaigns and the 1996 passage of the Personal Responsibility Act was accompanied by sudden drops in the level of private giving to assist the poor and in the percentage of private giving dedicated to helping the poor.

The dissertation also challenges some left-wing critics of charity who assert that the encouragement of direct-services volunteerism has diverted people from getting involved in political activism to get government to address the root causes of poverty. My survey and interviews indicate that, in fact, assisting individuals is a fundamental step for many people and even organizations toward understanding the complexity of the problems facing the poor, often leading them to greater political awareness and to involvement in public advocacy on behalf of their clientele.

Finally, I address the implications of these findings to the broader discussion of civil society and social capital in America, in which it is often assumed that “big government” and “big citizenship” as mutually opposed values and forces. Instead, I argue, an activist government can foster the sense that our problems are societal in nature, and that we all have a role as members of society to play a role in solving these problems, while government policy that treats problems as purely individual in nature is more likely to dampen civic involvement, as we come to feel less as members of a society and more as isolated individuals responsible for only our own problems.

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I want to acknowledge three people who were instrumental in this project's reaching fruition.

Professor Frances Fox Piven, whose own work has been an inspiration to me, put an extraordinary amount of time and energy into her role as my faculty advisor. Not only has she been an outstanding source of advice regarding the material content of this dissertation, but she has also been an enthusiastic supporter of this project, and has helped to restore my confidence during my moments of doubt. For someone who has achieved such fame in her field, Professor Piven continues to show a tremendous amount of dedication to helping all the students she advises.

Professor Andrew J. Polsky's belief in this project, his willingness to volunteer generous amounts of time to provide his advice and help, and his perceptive insights on the issues I have addressed, were also vital to this project's success.

Despite these first two acknowledgements, I must note that my argument in this dissertation, and my interpretations of the data I present, are my own, and that I am solely responsible for any mistakes in the presentation of facts or in the interpretation of data which I may have inadvertently made.

Finally, I especially want to thank my wife, Linda, without whom--for so many reasons--I would never have maintained the persistence to have made this project a reality.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

In his speech at the April 1997 Presidential Summit for America's Future, President Bill Clinton proclaimed, "The era of big government may be over, but the era of big challenges for our country is not, and so we need an era of big citizenship."¹

The event launched General Colin Powell's America's Promise organization, dedicated to encouraging people to volunteer to assist America's "at risk" youths through after school, tutoring, mentoring, and other activities. A large focus was put on getting the corporate community to contribute to the effort in a variety of ways, from giving employees paid leave to do volunteer work on company time to recruiting teens to tutor elementary school children, to contributing free services to children in need.

Several months after "ending welfare as we know it" by signing into law the Personal Responsibility Act of 1996, the president was acting as the lead cheerleader at an event designed to encourage greater volunteerism and private giving in America. The irony of this sequence of events was not lost on Brian Becker, co-coordinator of the National People's Campaign, who wrote, "It is utter hypocrisy to promote the idea that private charity and the benevolent activity of corporate CEO's can take the place of the rights that poor families won sixty years ago."²

1 CNN.com All Politics, April 28, 1997.

2 Brian Becker, "Why We Are Marching April 27," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, April 25, 1997.

Yet, in an amazingly concise fashion, the President was expressing a set of beliefs with a long standing place in American thought, both popular and scholarly. First, we are a nation with a uniquely strong tradition of private charity and private voluntary activity to help those of us who are in need. While government programs may at times be necessary to help our worst-off citizens, private efforts are more compassionate and from the heart, have a more profound impact on those in need, tailor their programs to the circumstances of their charges, and work to instill in those they help the values and skills they will need to escape and to stay out of poverty. Private efforts are thus superior in effectiveness to handouts from impersonal government bureaucracies. As the President stated, "you and I know that a lot of the problems facing our children are problems of the human heart -- problems that can only be resolved when there is a one-on-one connection, community by community, neighborhood by neighborhood, street by street, home by home with every child in this country entitled to live out their God-given destiny."³

The president was also expressing a commonly held assumption--in both popular and scholarly circles--that there is an inverse relationship between government activism and individual and community activism to help solve social problems. It was first the argument of conservative Republicans, but has now become the view of the mainstream of both political parties, that government programs have crushed individual and private community initiative, have made people dependent on government and less willing and able to help themselves and each other. The President's Summit, also known as the "Volunteer Summit,"

3CNN.Com All Politics, opp. cit.

was a dramatic display of this widely held belief that we must reduce government's role in providing social welfare and community development and encourage people within communities to step forward and take over this role, that the two cannot occur at the same time because they are mutually exclusive.

Finally, and least obvious, the President was appealing to a deeply held belief in the value of people being involved in their communities as a form of what social scientists have come to call "social capital." It is a belief that we are better citizens and better people if we work to help ourselves and each other instead of depending on government to do this work.

The President neatly packaged this set of beliefs into one concise sentence: we need "big citizenship" to retain our freedom, volunteerism builds compassion and serves people in a way that "big government" cannot, and the two cannot exist together.

"Active Government, Active Communities": An Inquiry Into Three Contemporary Debates

Originally, this study was intended as a contribution to the ongoing public debate over the shape of social welfare policy in the United States. Provoked by President Clinton's revealing Volunteer Summit speech, I was moved to present an argument to challenge a widely held assumption: that there is an inverse relationship between governmental and private voluntary efforts to assist people who are poor; that there is a zero-sum of compassion and effort, that we have to choose between government social welfare provision and private charitable efforts, that more of one means less of the other.

In the process of thinking about and conducting this study, however, it quickly became apparent that my argument and the data I was collecting would also have significance for two related, important contemporary American debates: on a broad level, it ties into the ongoing discussion of “civil society”, the debates over its precise benefits to society at large and to a vital democracy, the relationship between government activism and the strength of civil society, and the ways in which the supposed diminution of civil society can be reversed and the institutions that create “social capital” can be bolstered. In addition, while my study was conceived as a test of right-wing assumptions about the alleged enervating effect which government activism has on volunteerism and philanthropy, it quickly became clear that my findings would also challenge many aspects of left-wing critiques of volunteerism, including the reverse side of the assumption that conservatives make about the relationship between government activism and volunteerism; while conservatives argue that an activist government causes people to look to government for solutions to problems and thus discourages people from stepping forward to help as volunteers, some critics from the left have recently argued that volunteerism provides an excuse for government to neglect important problems, and for people not to pressure government to act on these problems. I will argue that many of the assumptions made by left critics of volunteerism suffer from faulty assumptions that are similar to the faulty assumptions made by the right.

Government Social Welfare and Private Voluntary Initiative To Help the Poor.

An assumption of a zero-sum of compassion and energy in society is behind the idea, which

I think is widely accepted, that cutting back government social welfare programs will unleash an outpouring of voluntary effort to assist the poor which will be qualitatively superior to the kind of assistance provided by government. This concept was an important supporting argument behind the conservative push for the Personal Responsibility Act of 1996, which replaced a variety of long-established federal social welfare programs including Aid to Families with Dependent Children with block grants to the states, and limited welfare recipients to no more than two consecutive years on welfare and five years over the course of one's lifetime. The primary justification for this ending of "welfare as we know it" was that welfare, in the view of conservatives, was well-intended but caused more harm than good to the people it was supposed to help. As Newt Gingrich put it, welfare "has had the unintended consequence of making welfare more attractive than work to many families, and once welfare recipients become dependent on public assistance, they are caught in the now-familiar welfare trap."⁴ Not only that, but the perverse incentives of the welfare system created an incentive to have illegitimate children, and led to a cycle in which generation after generation was dependent upon welfare.

However, eliminating this supposed source of dependency was not the only rationale behind dismantling AFDC. In addition to forcing people to take individual responsibility, conservatives also argued that government programs had to be dismantled in order to encourage civic responsibility among the public at large. As Gingrich put it, "...what Jefferson understood was that you had to have limited government precisely in order to

4 Newt Gingrich, et. al., *Contract With America*, (Random House, New York, 1994), p. 67.

liberate people to engage in civic responsibility, and that the larger government grew, the more you would crowd out civic responsibility”⁵ (A misrepresentation of Jefferson, since he was concerned about government stepping on civil liberties, not about government assisting people in poverty }.

Put another way, the conservative argument about welfare is not only that this and other government programs breed dependence upon government among the poor, but also that government programs breed in the public at large a dependence on government to take care of problems such as poverty, and we thus do not get involved on our own in helping to take care of these problems when government is overly involved. According to this argument, we now need to return to a time when, supposedly, through volunteerism, the members of communities built social welfare networks, defended their communities from crime, established schools, maintained moral standards, created recreational facilities, and performed many other social functions through private initiative—a Tocquevillian utopia. We will return to this imagined utopia when we reduce the role of government in providing social goods. When government’s role is reduced, it will thus unleash this voluntary spirit among the millions of people who would volunteer if their potential voluntary effort were not “crowded out” by government efforts, and we can therefore anticipate an outpouring of voluntary action to replace government action.

This view is expressed by Michael Tanner in *The End of Welfare*, who posits that “if government welfare disappears, there is no reason to believe that Americans will not

5 Gingrich, *Contract With America*, p. 192.

respond, as they have in the past, with increased giving.”⁶ (I will critique the empirical evidence Tanner provides to support this argument later.)

However, I would contend, if we believe that private volunteerism is good for our society (as I will argue), then we are mistaken if we think we will drive an outpouring of private voluntary effort by reducing the role of government. To the contrary, for several reasons, I believe that having government pay less attention to a particular problem will actually dampen the level of volunteerism to help on that problem, and that government attention to a problem will foster greater volunteerism. Intuitively, this argument, which I will refer to as an “active government, active communities” theory, seems more logical than the “crowding out” theory for several reasons:

1. *Government directly funds a large share of voluntary activity in the United States.*

Many people perceive the non-profit sector as an alternative to addressing problems through government programs. However, it has been well-established by a number of scholars who study the non-profit sector and charity to the poor that government and the non-profit sector are intimately tied together in a direct funding relationship. (These scholars include Lester Salamon, Jennifer Wolch, Michael Katz, and others, whose arguments will be discussed further in the following chapter.) Currently and historically, one of the major ways that government in the United States tackles and has tackled social problems is by working through private organizations that use volunteers to provide help to people and communities. In fact, 30 percent of the

6 Michael Tanner, *The End of Welfare*, (Cato Institute, Washington, D.C., 1996), p. 147

income of all non-profit organizations in the United States today comes from federal, state, and local government. Since these non-profits organize the bulk of volunteer activity, cuts in expenditures that help to support these organizations will result in a decline in volunteerism.

While this has been established by a number of theorists already mentioned, it is merely the starting point of an examination of the relationship between government activism and voluntary action. My own argument will go further than that of the "partners in public service" school. The effect government activism has on the non-profit sector and volunteerism is not merely one of direct funding, but of fostering a general atmosphere in which attitudes toward people in need are compassionate, in which larger numbers of people will feel a responsibility to engage in helping behavior. Thus government activism does not only promote the existence of private agencies directly responsible for carrying out government programs; it also creates in people a frame of mind that they should work to help others in general, and thus promotes genuine, compassionate voluntary action. It does so in several ways:

2. *Government action publicizes problems, and thus raises awareness of the need to volunteer and to donate money to help address those problems.* Government activity in any issue area is a major source of publicity about the issues being addressed. If the government has a program to help get homeless people off the street and back on their feet, people who were not aware of the problem will learn about it because it will be discussed in the media, because the subway will have

posters with a phone number to call, because the problem will be associated with the acronym of an agency. And if people already knew about the problem but were able to ignore it, they will get the idea, when government is involved, that it is an important problem worthy of our attention.

3. *Government action to address a problem defines the problem as social in nature.*

Most important, when government is active in trying to solve a problem, it delivers a message that the nature of the problem is at least in part social, not solely individual. It defines the problem as not simply being the fault of the individuals who are suffering, but as something for which we should all share responsibility. On the other hand, the rhetoric our politicians use to promote cuts in social programs sends very different messages, such as that the poor are to blame for their circumstances and that society as a whole should not play a role in assisting individuals and communities that are suffering. It encourages the belief that poverty is the result of character flaws among the poor. This demonization of the poor not only contributes to a political climate that makes possible the reduction of the government's role in social welfare; it creates an environment in which people feel that society has little responsibility for the well-being of individuals. This attitude that we are all isolated individuals responsible for our own fates is not conducive to a sense of a need to volunteer to participate in the community.

4. *Compassionate actions by government reflect compassionate attitudes in society, so more compassionate government policy is consistent with an atmosphere of*

greater compassionate action on the part of members of the society. When people believe that society has a responsibility to assist people who are poor, they are more likely to believe that this should be done both through government programs and through private, voluntary initiative; they are not likely to believe in doing this through one and not the other. It does not make sense that the average person who thinks more help should be provided to the poor would vote against a political candidate who advocates government doing more because he or she believes this is a private responsibility. As a corollary, people who believe that a problem is not worthy of compassionate attention from government are likely to also believe the problem is not worthy of their own compassionate attention.

The articulation of this theory and the presentation of evidence to strongly support it is the main object of this study. In order to learn whether my “active government, active communities” theory is valid, I have conducted several types of research. First, in order to learn whether there is a relationship between government social welfare policy and levels of private philanthropy to the cause of helping people who are poor, I have tracked historical trends in government spending on social welfare and levels of private giving over the past half century. I have found not only that there is a significant relationship between these variables, but also that points at which there have been significant turns in political rhetoric about the poor have been accompanied by very distinct and sudden changes in the trend line of private giving to causes that help the poor, a finding with some very interesting implications. In addition, I have compared levels of public welfare among the 50 states and

how they correlate with levels of private charity within the states. Once again, I have found some very interesting trends in support of my argument, and have provided an attempt to explain why high levels of public welfare tend to be highly correlated to high levels of private charity.

In addition, I have conducted a study of the voluntary community in New York City, consisting of a survey of over 350 volunteers and interviews with 40 administrators of volunteer programs. This study, as I will show, unearthed some highly revealing information about the motivations of volunteers and their views of their own role in relation to government's role in assisting the poor and helping to solve societal problems. The study has important implications for understanding the ways in which governmental actions can potentially have an impact on people's desire and willingness to volunteer to help strangers who are in need.

The main purpose of this project remains an exploration specifically of the relationship between government activism on social welfare and private volunteerism and philanthropy to help people who are poor. However, as an outgrowth of my research on this question, the study also address two other, broader, ongoing contemporary debates:

Government and Civil Society. Throughout the past decade, "civil society" has been one of the hot topics in political science. Contemporary theorists have been reviving old ideas about the importance of a lively civic environment, in which there is a wealth of voluntary associations of all types. Voluntary institutions that are highly participatory build "horizontal bonds" among people, give people a sense of efficacy, and create trust among

people—all important elements of the “social capital” that is necessary for a well-working democracy. Many of these theorists have expressed concern that civil society and social capital are declining in the United States, a concern which has led to a great deal of discussion about how a vigorous civil society is best fostered. And, harkening back to the ideas of Alexis De Tocqueville and others, many believe that there is a need to strictly limit government in order to ensure space for independent institutions of civil society to flourish.

While it is undoubtedly true that a government that steps on civil liberties will squash civil society institutions, is it true that a government that is active in providing for the needs of the less well-off, regulating business practices to protect workers and consumers, and that is active in a number of other ways to help its citizens is detrimental to civil society? If the commonly accepted zero-sum assumption about government activism on social welfare and private voluntary efforts to help the poor is true, this would imply that there is a broader zero-sum relationship between government activism and civil society in general.

As I will point out at greater length, the main thread in theories about civil society since at least the time that Tocqueville wrote—a thread which I am challenging—is that a more active government inevitably has the consequence of a less active civil society. In this argument, being reliant on government will in general cause us to rely less on ourselves and our fellows, and to become passive people, who unquestioningly allow government to take control of too many aspects of our social lives. We will lose the space that government leaves for private action and will gradually find ourselves living in an increasingly totalitarian system. This argument was made most articulately by Tocqueville, who wrote

that a primary condition for despotism is a situation containing “an innumerable multitude of men, all equal and alike...each of them, living apart as a stranger to the fate of all the rest...” Lacking ties to each other, these men allow themselves to be subordinated to “an immense and tutelary power, which takes upon itself alone to secure their gratification and watch over their fate.” Finally, this power “covers the surface of society with a network of small, complicated rules, minute and uniform, through which the most energetic characters cannot penetrate to rise above the crowd.”⁷ And so it is not only our individuality and self-reliance, but also our reliance on one another in our communities, that keeps us from becoming overly dependent upon state power and thus keeps us free.

My own argument, that active government begets active communities, thus goes beyond merely challenging common assumptions about the relationship between government and volunteerism to also challenges broader assumptions that are often made about the relationship between government and civil society in general. It is not how much government does, or how big government is, but what government does that affects the vigor of civil society. Instead of assuming an inverse relationship between government activity and civil society, we should be able to see that often activist government policies can be an important factor in enhancing civil society.

A government that is active in trying to address societal problems, up to a point, will tend to beget a vigorous civil society, and a government that does not address societal

⁷ Alexis De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, (Random House, New York, 1945), p. 336-337.

problems in an energetic way will tend to dampen civil society. In order to be actively involved in social life, people must view themselves as being part of a society; if they feel like isolated individuals, they will act like isolated individuals. Governmental action and inaction can communicate very strong messages about the extent to which we are a society rather than a mere collection of isolated individuals. Government can set a mood, through its policies, that says that we are all individuals solely responsible for our own well-being. But if government chooses to address a wide variety of issues and problems in an activist manner, and can communicate a sense that society is responsible for these issues and problems, it moves these issues out of the individual realm and into the social realm. The more we perceive of areas of life as shared or as part of a public life, the more inclined we are not only to participate in helping out on the specific issues which government is trying to address, but also to work with other people for the common good in general.

The Value of Voluntary Action. Americans tend to have a very romantic notion of charity and of volunteerism. In American thought, both popular and scholarly, we are seen as a nation with a uniquely strong tradition of private charity and private voluntary activity to help those of us who are in need. And it is thought that, while government programs may at times be necessary to help our worst-off citizens, private efforts are more compassionate and from the heart, have a more profound impact on those in need, tailor their programs to the circumstances of their charges, and work to instill in those they help the values and skills they will need to escape and to stay out of poverty. Private efforts are thus viewed as superior in effectiveness to handouts from impersonal government bureaucracies. As

President Clinton stated in his Volunteer Summit speech, "you and I know that a lot of the problems facing our children are problems of the human heart -- problems that can only be resolved when there is a one-on-one connection, community by community, neighborhood by neighborhood, street by street, home by home with every child in this country entitled to live out their God-given destiny."⁸

To dedicate a study of this length to the relationship between government activism and voluntary activity is to imply that the researcher holds a similar belief that volunteerism benefits society in unique ways and that we should thus seek to encourage it. Indeed, this was the assumption with which I started, not being fully aware of the criticisms that many social scientists, particularly from the left, have levied against volunteerism and charity.

But, as I learned, criticisms of volunteerism and charity certainly do abound. Charity, it is argued, provides an excuse for not taking systematic action to eliminate poverty and related problems, enables the rich to be seen as charitable while they engage in other activities that ensure the persistence of the very problems that they claim to be trying to address through their charitable contributions, tax breaks for charitable contributions enable the rich and the large corporations to avoid paying money to government that could go to social welfare programs, the ways in which charity is given is often demeaning to the recipients, charities do not really help the populations they claim to help, and the encouragement of participation in the provision of direct services to individual clients deflects people's attention from the need to take political action to address the real, broader,

⁸ CNN.Com All Politics, opp. cit.

societal inequities that are really at the root of the problems these individuals face. I have learned that the supposed beneficial qualities of charity and of volunteerism, to both the people it is intended to help and to society as a whole, cannot be simply assumed outright; this is a position within an argument that needs to be defended, and to ignore the need to defend the premise that volunteerism is a societal good would be to diminish the worth of this study.

Based on what I have learned from my interviews with volunteer program administrators and some of the volunteers' responses to the survey, I conclude that, while some of the criticisms are valid, they tend to be extremely overstated, and they tend to ignore a variety of important benefits of a vigorous charitable sector. For one, the assumption of a zero-sum relationship between direct service and political advocacy, is mistaken. For a variety of reasons, first-hand voluntary experience with people suffering tends to raise volunteers' awareness as to the complexity of problems, the limitations of charity, and the need for political actions to correct these problems. Not only does direct service volunteerism provide a political education to individual volunteers, but it also has an educational impact on the agencies themselves, which often start out solely for the purpose of direct services and gradually realize the need to engage in political advocacy on behalf of their client populations. In addition, the connections that are often built between the helpers and the helped can create a constituency on behalf of relatively powerless people during times when public programs to assist them are under attack, thus providing a final line of defense.

Also, as I will attempt to show, notions about the supposedly demeaning nature of charity and the power relationship between givers and potential recipients inherent in charity are often based on outdated stereotypes about the ways in which most charities work. In fact, the expansion of government provision of material assistance relegates many charities to providing supplemental services and removes from charities the power to grant or deny people basic sustenance. Thus, the aid provided by charities is often provided in a much less intrusive and demeaning way than is public welfare. Finally, while participation in volunteerism and philanthropy is often characterized as an avocation of the well-to-do, participation today is actually spread out among significant numbers of people among all classes, races, and other categorical spectrums. It is thus a highly democratized form of social participation, and a vital part of a vigorous civil society.

The Political Stakes

In the following pages, I will attempt to argue convincingly that a strong civil society is essential to maintaining a strong and highly participatory democracy, and that the willingness of people to engage in altruistic activity in their communities is a vital aspect of a strong civil society. I also intend to make a strong argument that private altruism can indeed assist people in need in important ways that government cannot.

But the main objective of this dissertation is still to challenge prevailing assumptions about the relationship between an active government and a vigorous civil society in which many individuals are willing to go out and help people in need. In fact, I will argue, if we see a positive value in private volunteerism and charity, then we are making a mistake as a

society if we expect to foster these values by “getting government out of the way.” We are making a mistake because we are ignoring the vital roles that government action and the political rhetoric that inevitably surrounds government action have in setting our agenda as a nation, in affecting the way the media portray problems in our society, in affecting what we think about and how we define the problems people face. If the prevailing government policy does less to help those in economic need, and accompanying political rhetoric ignores poverty or argues for less compassion for the poor, people are less likely to have their attention called to the problems of the poor and are less likely to view these as social problems. Instead, they are more likely to be led to see the problems as individual in nature, as the responsibility of those who are suffering. And if we see people's problems as the fault of the individual instead of the fault of the society, we are less likely to feel a responsibility to go out and help on our own.

To assume otherwise, to believe that people who are in a compassionate mood will want that compassion expressed through private charity but not through government activism, is to assume that people think about politics with the nuance and sophistication of a political scientist. Most people are smart, but do not find the time, or have the interest, to think in great depth about public policy. The average person is not going to think, “I feel great compassion for the poor, think the problems they face aren't entirely their own fault, and think they deserve help, but this should be the role of private agencies and not government.” People have general attitudes, which they express in their choices of candidates for political offices as well as in their choices in their personal lives. If a person

feels compassionate about people who happen to be poor, that feeling is likely to drive both his vote and his personal activity. It would be absurd to think that people who believe the poor should be helped would vote for politicians they think will be less compassionate to the poor. In other words, you are probably more likely to go out and help the poor if you think the poor should be helped, and you are also more likely to vote for politicians who promise compassionate policies toward the poor. A society that has more people who are likely to vote for compassion will also probably contain more people who are likely to perform compassionate acts themselves, and vice versa.

If I succeed in this project, I will provide substantial evidence that it is mistaken to believe people are less involved in helping each other and improving their communities when government plays a role in these causes, and this evidence may even provide support for the possibility that people are even more likely to initiate and participate in such efforts when there is an activist government. My focus will be on volunteerism and philanthropy, particularly in the area of social welfare. My question is, if a strong civil society is essential to a strong democracy, and if volunteerism is an important aspect of a strong civil society, then how do we best foster these values? My argument will be that these values are best fostered by a government that sets an example by promoting compassionate social welfare policies. And people who believe that there will be an outpouring of private voluntary activity when government cuts back its social welfare programs will be disappointed when this outpouring fails to materialize.

Structure of the Study. The study will be structured as follows. The following chapter, Chapter Two, will review and analyze some of the major perspectives on the relationship between government activism and volunteerism and philanthropy in America, and will challenge the thread running through much of the literature that insists that “big government” and “big citizenship” are opposites, contenders for power locked in a zero-sum game. It will also present the arguments by several historians and political scientists who have empirically shown the interrelationship between government activism and private philanthropy and volunteerism.

Chapters Three, Four, Five, and Six will present data in support of my “active government, active communities” theory. In Chapters Three and Four, I will present the findings of a survey of over 350 volunteers in New York City, plus the results of interviews with scores of directors of volunteer programs in the New York City non-profit community, to present a picture of the motivations of people who volunteer and the factors that tend to bring people out for different types of causes. Through this exposition, I hope to draw inferences about how differing public policy toward people in need might affect people's decisions to make a commitment to reach out and help this population. Chapter Five will present my study of the historical relationship between government spending on social welfare and private philanthropy to welfare-related causes in the United States over the past half-century, and will attempt to explain why the trend lines on these variables have tended to move in parallel directions. Chapter Six will present my study of the relationship between spending on social welfare among the 50 states and various measures of the extent of the

charitable community within the states. I will show that states that dedicate a large amount of public resources to help people in need tend to also contain the largest numbers of people dedicated to helping the poor through private charitable efforts, and I will propose some possible explanations for this clear relationship.

In Chapter Seven, I will take on the critics of charity who claim that voluntary efforts to assist people in need justify an anemic welfare state, distract people from the need to focus on the larger issues that cause poverty and to call for political action to solve the problem, and are often demeaning to the people they claim to serve. Returning to my survey of volunteers in New York City and my interviews with administrators of volunteer programs, I will show how volunteers, and the organizations which employ them, often undergo an educational process that leads to increased, rather than decreased, public policy advocacy on behalf of the poor.

In Chapter Eight, I will explore the implications of this study for the broader discussion of civil society, demonstrating that the commonly assumed status of government and institutions of civil society as forces in opposition to each other is mistaken, and how vigorous government action and a vigorous civil society may actually beget one another. Chapter Nine will present conclusions from the study, implications for public policy, and recommendations for further research on the issues I have addressed.

In this project, I do not have the ambition of settling the questions I have raised once and for all. But hopefully, the data I unearth in this project, and my analysis of it, will represent a valuable contribution to the ongoing discussion of civil society in America--the

importance of a vigorous civil society, whether civil society is really declining, and how to build and maintain the social capital necessary to ensure a healthy democratic society. Volunteerism and philanthropy are important aspects of a strong civil society; they are an expression of whether and how deeply people perceive themselves as belonging to a community, of their awareness of problems, of their sense of caring for their fellows. Volunteerism and--contrary to what is popularly thought--philanthropy are most frequently the acts of average people. While the rich may give more than people of more modest means in sheer numbers of dollars, the latter give two-and-a-half times more as a percentage of their total income. When volunteerism and philanthropy rise, it reflects a sense of civic engagement in the general population. When they decline, it may reflect a sense of anomie, isolation, withdrawal from civic life which, as Robert Putnam has found, bode poorly for our chances of maintaining a society in which the people are active and civically involved enough to perform their vital role as a check on government, holding government accountable and ensuring that it serves the people well.

In the 1990s, a fear of tyranny by big government and a belief that government activism leads to a dependent people, rather than a vigorous people that takes initiative in solving problems, has led to or justified more conservative governmental policies. But we may discover that the assumptions of an inverse relationship between government and private initiative are terribly mistaken, and that cutting government will diminish, rather than revive, the civil society and social capital that exists.

It is vital, then, that we stop relying on presuppositions about the relationship

between government and civil society and closely examine data that may reinforce or contradict that assumption. This study is an effort to learn more about this relationship and to provide information and analysis that may be of great import to future discussions of the direction of public policy.

CHAPTER TWO:
BIG GOVERNMENT AND BIG CITIZENSHIP:
CHALLENGING THE ZERO-SUM MYTH

When President Clinton posed government action and private voluntary action as contradictory values in his Volunteer Summit speech (“The era of big government is over...so we need to begin an era of big citizenship”), he was expressing a way of thinking that informs—or as I will argue, misinforms—much intellectual and public thinking about compassion and social welfare in America. In conservative rhetoric, an overly active government not only diminishes a sense of personal responsibility and thus breeds a sense of dependency on the part of those government is assisting, but it also causes the rest of us to feel less of a need to express compassion toward people in need because we come to depend on government to take care of the problems—we develop a feeling of “compassion fatigue.” There is thus a trade-off between government social programs and private, voluntary initiative by communities and members of communities to help those who are worst off.

But this assumption of a trade-off between government efforts to provide welfare and private charitable initiatives affects the thinking of those on the left as well as those on the right. For some critics of charity on the left, the existence of private charity provides us with an excuse to avoid the more systematic response to poverty that could be effected only

through a more comprehensive and coordinated government effort.

Both the conservative critics of "big government" and the left critics of charity share what I believe is a faulty assumption; that there is a zero-sum of energy and effort for the expression of compassion in society, and there is thus a trade-off between public and private efforts to assist people in need. More of one means less of the other.

Over the past two decades, the conservative attack on the welfare state has been increasingly justified on the basis of compassion. Welfare, it is argued, is not truly compassionate; it is instead a system which traps people in poverty, to the benefit of an establishment which profits from the system. Unleashed from the chains of welfare, those poor who are able will put greater effort into rising out of poverty, and given the opportunity in our opportunity-rich society, most will succeed. But while this is the most important rationale behind ending "welfare as we know it," it is equally important to the conservative argument that those who are truly in need, those who cannot lift themselves up on their own, will also be better off under a system in which there is less government welfare. For, in the absence of government welfare, vast numbers of people who had come to depend on government to solve the problems around them will realize their personal responsibilities to contribute to the improvement of their communities and to help people in need. The truly needy will benefit from the resultant outpouring of voluntary initiative, since these voluntary efforts will be qualitatively superior to government programs--more personal, more compassionate, and more attuned to the specific needs of their clientele than federal welfare handouts and federally-run programs are capable of being. Meanwhile, critics from the left

have come to view volunteerism and philanthropy as an excuse for governmental inaction and as a force that channels people's efforts away from advocacy for the types of systematic policy change that is needed to truly address the problems of poverty.

In this chapter, I will review some of the recent arguments about government action and volunteerism from both the right and the left, the zero-sum assumptions that underlie them, and what I believe are the negative consequences of posing these values as competing with each other. I will present my own argument that we need to stop thinking within the boxes of government action vs. private action, and will argue that governmental and voluntary efforts to help people in need are more likely to be complementary than mutually exclusive.

How Do We Foster High Levels of Compassionate Voluntary Activity?

The Conservative View--"Big Government" Means "Small Citizenship." The predominant perspective today on the relationship between government activism and private voluntary action to help people who are poor is the conservative viewpoint. Conservatives believe that "big government" makes us dependent, zapping the vigor and self-reliance of society. Of course, this is said to have had its worst effect on the poor, who have become reliant on public assistance and have been turned, essentially, into wards of the state. But dependence does not only impact on the poor. All of us depend on the government to perform an increasing number of social functions, and in the process we become enfeebled, unable to solve our own problems. Government activism crowds out individual and community initiative, leading to a less vigorous and self-reliant society. Only if big

government gets out of the way will people begin to help themselves and their communities again; and only when we regain that sense of community will we solve the problems of poverty and the moral breakdown of society.

If government gets out of the way, it is argued, we will return to a time when people would join efforts to help others and to improve their communities instead of depending on government, and they would do a better job because they understand their local problems-- they would be actively involved in helping people to help themselves, rather than merely giving handouts. In other words, government agencies and private organizations are bound up in a zero-sum game in which the expansion of one sector leads to a necessary and resultant contraction of the other.

Prominent proponents of this viewpoint contend that the modern welfare state "crowds out" traditional, community-based nonprofit assistance, to the detriment of the very people we are trying to help, who become dependent and lose their traditional community ties, their morale, and their sense of self-respect and self-sufficiency. "...every piece of social policy substitutes for some traditional arrangement, whether good or bad, a new arrangement in which public authorities take over, at least in part, the role of the family, of the ethnic and neighborhood group, of voluntary associations," asserts Nathan Glazer. "In doing so, social policy weakens the position of these traditional agents and further encourages needy people to depend on the government for help rather than on the traditional structures. This is the basic force behind the ever growing demand for more social programs and their frequent failure to satisfy our hopes." Glazer contends that, instead of "social

policies that sanction the abandonment of traditional practices," we need "the creation and building of new traditions, or new versions of old traditions."⁹ Concludes Glazer, "The issue indeed is governmental provision itself, and the degree to which it can be replaced by other mechanisms which utilize more of the fine grain of society," including "its voluntary organizations."¹⁰

One thing government certainly should do, according to Glazer, is to "stay out of the way of those services and programs that arise without governmental assistance to satisfy some need of individuals or community, that manage well enough without the assistance of government."¹¹ When government does get involved in a field in which voluntary agencies are active, or when government creates a program that funds existing voluntary agencies in order to help them to expand their services, inevitably a "substitution effect" occurs. The agencies must increasingly answer to a host of governmental regulations and performance requirements, and the people involved lose a sense of ownership over their program. Volunteers begin to provide less assistance, contributors less money, and workers less commitment. The uniqueness of the agency's approaches to providing services is diminished as the program is altered to meet the "one-size-fits-all" government requirements. The program ceases to reflect the values of the community and begins to reflect the values of the central government. The commitment of actual members of the community declines.

9 Nathan Glazer, *The Limits of Social Policy*, p. 7-8.

10 Glazer, p. 103.

11 Glazer, p. 129.

Marvin Olasky expresses a similar viewpoint in terms of the displacement of true compassion once exhibited by traditional, community-based charities that focused on correcting the individual traits that lead to pauperism with a reliance on government programs and a focus on environmental reasons for poverty. Olasky points out how historical changes in our understanding of compassion are reflected in changes in the word's dictionary definition. In 1834, one dictionary defined compassion as "a suffering with another; painful sympathy....", while in a dictionary of the 1990s compassion is defined as a "deep feeling for and understanding of misery or suffering and the concomitant desire to promote its alleviation." To Olasky, the old definition of compassion reflects the style of charity that predominated in the 18th and 19th Centuries in America. Charity was largely private, and involved caring individuals who were willing to develop a close relationship with the people they were trying to help, to work intimately with them on the problems that caused their poverty. True compassion also meant a willingness to distinguish between the deserving poor, who were to receive alms because they were not able-bodied or had some other legitimate reason for not being able to support themselves, and the paupers, people who were able-bodied but slothful, intemperate, who frittered away their money on sin. These undeserving poor were to be helped only in return for becoming sober, reading the Bible, doing "make-work" to develop good work habits, and taking other steps to improve themselves. Giving alms without distinguishing between the non-able and the pauper would encourage increased waste, dependence and pauperism on the part of the able-bodied, and the failure to discern between the truly needy and the slothful would result in less resources to help the truly needed.

True compassion also involved learning enough about the clients to be able to work first within the traditional networks of family and community. The first thing a volunteer was to do was to find out if a person had family members who could help.

Indiscriminate and overly generous giving, no matter whether the source is private or public, is harmful to the very people who need help, because it encourages the bad, or sinful, habits which resulted in the individuals' poverty in the first place, and because a growing perception that charities are wasting their money on undeserving people that merely feeds their bad habits will result in "compassion fatigue" on the part of the donors. But, according to Olasky, this is exactly what began to occur as the newer, shallower definition of compassion gradually began to prevail in the second half of the 19th Century and the early 20th Century.

Finally, government took over the primary role of providing for those in need, leading to the ultimate perversion of the concept of compassion. Public welfare uncoupled the ideas of pauperism and shame. It removed the distinction between deserving and undeserving poor, the unable and the slothful, and fed the wastefulness and sin that had led to poverty in the first place. Most importantly, it displaced the sources of true compassion—the private charities that once predominated, led by caring individuals who truly wanted to become involved with their charges and to help them improve themselves in order to be able to climb out of poverty.

Olasky believes that compassion, "which once had the power to compel action, is now merely a rhetorical device trotted out regularly" by Washington politicians. "Around

the country," states Olasky, "compassion fatigue is evident as people tire of seeing generosity misused or, apparently, of no use."¹² The poor become dependent on government and stop trying to help themselves out of their conditions; and instead of trying to help, the rest of us look toward government to shower money on the problem instead of getting personally involved in doing things to really help the poor.¹³

Thus, for both Glazer and Olasky, there is a "zero sum game" between efforts to assist people who are poor through government social welfare programs and private volunteerism to assist people in need. Government welfare programs displace traditional, community ties, which are in part expressed in private, community-based social service networks and agencies. And the latter are superior because they promote strong, self-sufficient communities, and they address the real problems of people who are poor and work intimately with them to help them overcome their personal failings and escape from poverty.

In short, according to these conservative commentators, there is an inverse relationship between what government does in the area of social welfare and the number of individuals who are willing to get involved themselves as volunteers and contributors to help the poor. The way to revive reliance on the traditional institutions of community is to gradually get government out of the business of social welfare and return this responsibility to voluntary organizations. Government programs get in the way of private, voluntary

12 Marvin Olasky, *The Tragedy of American Compassion* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery, 1995), p. 4.

13 Olasky, p. 101-104

initiative, and the only way to solve this problem is to get government out of the way of the good-hearted people in communities who really want to help their less well-off neighbors. These ideas fit in neatly with the popular sense that a bloated, invasive, impersonal Washington bureaucracy has taken over many functions that are better left to individuals and communities. They imply an inverse relationship between government and private, voluntary initiative.

In a more systematic theory about the nature of voluntary organizations and the chain of events that leads to their formation, non-profit sector expert Burton A. Weisbrod has, perhaps unintentionally, provided support for this idea of an inverse relationship between government action and private, voluntary initiative. In Weisbrod's widely accepted theory, termed by another theorist as the "market failure/government failure theory,"¹⁴ the market and government are each seen as having inherent limitations that curtail their ability to provide collective goods. The market does not produce collective goods because of the "free rider" problem; people will not pay for products they could enjoy without having to pay. Since government can tax people to produce collective goods, it can overcome this "market failure." But, "in a democratic society it will produce only that range and quantity of collective goods that can command majority support. Inevitably, this will leave some unsatisfied demand on the part of segments of the political community that feel a need for

14 Lester M. Salamon, *Partners in Public Service: Government-Nonprofit Relations in the Modern Welfare State* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), discussion of Weisbrod, p. 39

a range of collective goods but cannot convince a majority to go along."¹⁵ The private, voluntary sector meets this set of needs by providing the collective goods that government fails to provide. The more active government is, the more collective goods the majority has agreed to obtain through government, the less need there is for nonprofits. But if the public, through its choices of government action, does not decide that these goods should be provided by government, these needs will remain unmet. Therefore, non-profits will be left to fill the void, and the minorities who want these collective goods will form non-profit, voluntary organizations to fulfill this purpose. The more collective goods are provided by government, the smaller the non-profit sector will be, and vice versa.

Thus, if we believe that a vibrant and vigorous non-profit, voluntary community is an important goal, if we believe private charities carry certain advantages over government programs--both in terms of the actual help they provide to people in need and in terms of their contribution to strong, self-reliant communities and a healthy civil society--then we should be looking to reduce the role of government. If we do so, we will open the door to a groundswell of voluntary programs created by private groups of actors, and an outpouring of volunteers who--relieved of dependence on government to solve social problems and awakened from compassion fatigue--will come out en masse to fill the gap in services left by government.

The Left View--Private Charity As An Excuse for Government Inattention to Problems. While commentators from the right deride "big government" as inhibiting public

15 Salamon, p. 39

willingness to get involved in private charitable activities that are claimed to be qualitatively superior to government programs, critics from the left deride charity as an excuse for inattention to the broader societal problems that are really behind the problems of the individuals whose suffering charities and the volunteers and donors they recruit are trying to ameliorate. They thus accuse charity of having the effect of perpetuating problems that could be fixed by a comprehensive governmental approach.

Charity, it is argued, does this in several ways. One is that the existence of a wide array of private social service organizations justifies inadequate public social welfare expenditures and programs. As Janet Poppendieck has observed, "the proliferation of charity contributes to our society's failure to grapple in meaningful ways with poverty....this massive charitable endeavor serves to relieve pressure for more fundamental solutions." It makes it "easier for government to shed its responsibility to the poor, reassuring policymakers and voters alike that no one will starve"¹⁶ or, as David Wagner has put it, "American charity has helped legitimize a highly individualist, anemic welfare state...."¹⁷ That is, because we believe that there is an ample supply of charitable efforts to assist the poor--a belief that is spread by the high volume of media publicity that charitable efforts receive, and because the media representations of charity are always so positive and heartwarming, we are more likely to accept cutbacks of government programs, even if we are concerned about the plight

16 Janet Poppendieck, *Sweet Charity? Emergency Food and the End of Entitlement* (Viking Penguin, New York, 1998), p. 5.

17 David Wagner, *What's Love Got to Do With It? A Critical Look at American Charity* (New Press, New York, 2000), p. 111.

of the poor. Little attention is called to the fact that, as Poppendieck vividly demonstrates in the case of voluntary emergency food provision, what is provided by charity is often meager and there is far too little charity to meet the existing level of need.

Second, charity reinforces the idea that the material necessities of life are not things to which people have a right, in the sense that we believe that people have the right to freedom of speech or to a trial by jury. Instead of pushing for the right of human beings to basic material needs, we learn from the charitable model that the receiving of such necessities is a gift, for which the recipients should feel grateful, and charity thus reinforces an ideology of voluntarism that obscures the fundamental destruction of rights.¹⁸ As Wagner writes, "The reliance on large-scale charitable enterprises to attempt to ameliorate social problems assumes a form of social organization in which sharp economic inequality exists and, with it, accepts (sometimes even glorifying) the fact that there will be those who are impoverished and needy."¹⁹ As a consequence, charity serves to glorify the rich as "heroes and model citizens who give" and presents the poor as "deferential and meek citizens who accept," and thus "delineates society with a clear boundary between moral and immoral,"²⁰ promotes belief in the justness of the socio-economic positions of these actors in this social script, and makes us less likely to want to push for political programs that would eradicate or at least minimize the economic inequality between these actors.

18 Poppendieck, p. 6.

19 Wagner, p. 71.

20 Wagner, p. 73.

Third, it is argued that the American focus on involving people in providing direct service to individuals in need on a one-at-a-time basis distracts people from the need to get involved in broader political advocacy. Or, as the proverbial story goes, it causes people to concentrate on saving people who are drowning in the river one-by-one as they float by, instead of going to the bridge where they are being thrown off. Charity programs “absorb the attention and energy of many of the people most concerned about the poor, distracting them from the larger issues of distributional politics.”²¹ Argues David Wagner, the massive formation of direct services organizations starting in the 1960s represents a “series of structural mechanisms to encapsulate and channel protest,” through which “formerly activist groups are funded in return for insurance of their depoliticization and their absorption within a system of bureaucratic and patronage relationships with the state and private sector organizations.”²² Political protest is replaced by direct service, and protest for political change to address the inequities that cause poverty is silenced. In this argument, the encouragement of helping individual sufferers through charitable giving and volunteerism channels people away from becoming advocates for the kind of systemic change that would make the helping of individuals unnecessary. It keeps us occupied and prevents us from going to the bridge from which the people are being pushed.

21 Poppendieck, p. 6.

22 Wagner, p. 217.

Government Activism and Volunteerism--The "Partners in Public Service" View

The critics of government activism from the right and the critics of charity from the left speak past each other in their arguments. On the one side, it is believed that we need to have government do less, get government out of the way, not only to reduce the dependency of individuals on government and to thus enable and empower them to raise themselves out of poverty, but to also unleash a groundswell of private compassionate voluntary activity that will be much more helpful to people in need than are bureaucratic and impersonal public welfare programs. Only if government does less will individuals do more on their own initiative. On the other side, we need to turn away from private charity; private charity provides an excuse and justification for an anemic government welfare state, and takes pressure off government for more systemic or radical change by getting those who care most about the problems of the poor to do non-political volunteer work instead of pushing for political change. More charity must thus result in less governmental attention to important problems.

Ultimately, the left and the right agree on an inverse relationship between government activism and private voluntary initiative on the problems of poverty; each takes a different side of this see-saw. The idea that government activism in social welfare and private volunteerism are contradictory values appears to be widely assumed in the public debate of the past decade. However, several scholars have provided much historical and empirical evidence to suggest that the idea that "big government" and "big citizenship" are contradictory is a myth; that, actually, increased levels of voluntary activity tend to coincide

with government initiatives, and that sometimes government activism is directly responsible for a great deal of the growth in voluntary activity.

Michael B. Katz has shown that the rapid growth of the nonprofit institutions in the 19th century went in tandem with a growth in government interest in promoting these institutions. Thus, the explosion of nonprofits dedicated to helping the poor in the first half of the 19th century "burst forth from both voluntary and state sponsorship." States "often gave money to voluntary associations to perform public functions, for instance, to run the educational system for New York City." This points not only to the "intermingling of voluntary and state activity but also to the very different, protean definition of public in early American history....This use of secular institutions as deliberate agencies of social policy...represented a new and momentous development in modern history."²³

Like many of the non-profit institutions of the 19th Century, poverty relief was a "public/private venture." Katz notes a study by Frederic Almy in 1899, who was trying to prove that private charity was sufficient to handle the problem of poverty by showing that, in cities with larger private charitable communities, there was less public provision of relief. However, "relations between public and private relief were not quite as neat as Almy would have liked." While cities that had eliminated outdoor relief had particularly large charitable sectors, and ones that were relatively liberal in supplying public relief had fewer charities, there was great variation in the relationship between public and private aid in the vast

23 Michael B. Katz, *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse: A Social History of Welfare in America* (New York: Basic, 1986), p. 11

number of cities in between these extremes. Furthermore, Almy ignored that, even where it appeared that the local government had gotten out of the business of providing relief, this was an illusion, because the governments were actually supplying the charities with a large percentage of their revenues. "Not only did both public and private institutions exist, but private institutions received large amounts of public funds, either directly from the state or from boards of supervisors or counties and towns who paid for the inmates they sent on a per capita basis." "Indeed," concludes Katz, "most private institutions could not have remained in business without the fees of inmates paid by public sources." In addition, private charitable institutions often received a large portion of their funds directly from public sources. In New York State, for example, half the total budget of charitable institutions and agencies came directly from the state, county boards of supervisors, and towns and cities. Granting all the abuses by workhouses and other privately run "indoor relief" institutions of the late 19th Century, conditions would arguably be much worse if not for the intervention of state and local government. In fact, the State government conducted inspections of the facilities and required the institutions to account for themselves through the requirement of annual reports.²⁴

"Most of us hold to a nostalgic image of a smaller-scale and less complicated American past, believing that federal and state governments in the United States did not become significant providers of social welfare until the middle of the twentieth century," observes Theda Skocpol. But contrary to this popular perception, the boom in formation of

24 Katz, p. 42-45.

voluntary charitable organizations during the 19th Century did not occur in a vacuum of public welfare provision. In fact, the 19th Century was dominated by a “distributive, discretionary welfare regime.”²⁵ By the post–Civil War period, “the U.S. federal government devoted over a quarter of its expenditures to pensions distributed among the populace,” and after 1890, “what amounted to disability and old–age pensions were paid quarterly from the federal Treasury to all applicants who could claim to be Union veterans, as well as to others claiming to be dependents of soldiers who had died during or after the war.” In addition, “common schooling for white citizens of all social classes spread across the land, putting the United States into the international forefront of countries offering public education. Some charitable and welfare institutions received subsidies from federal and state legislatures....” Americans of all social classes received opportunities for economic advancement in the form of public distributions of land and other resources, and “certain American workers were buffered in adversity or saved from destitution by the discretionary welfare efforts of urban political machines in the great cities.”²⁶

Jennifer Wolch has also shown that the voluntary sector's growth in the 19th century was largely spurred by government involvement in providing relief to the poor. “Despite the common perception of a minimal state role in welfare” in the first half of the century, “the state and local governments responsible for poor relief, education, and health care typically provided more funds for these purposes than the charitable sector.” And after the

25 Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*, p. 65-66.

26 Skocpol, p. 96.

Civil War, government increasingly channeled these funds through voluntary bodies." In New York City, for example, 57 percent of public funds dedicated to social welfare were given to private charitable institutions.²⁷

The rise of the federal welfare state since the 1930's has not displaced voluntary activity, writes Wolch. To the contrary, it has led to a dramatically increased level of voluntary involvement in helping the poor. "The state increasingly called on voluntary sector bodies for a variety of purposes...dependence grew particularly deep in the area of service delivery, as the practice of contracting-out became more common. Similarly, the Great Society programs, 1967 Social Security Amendments, and policies to de-institutionalize service-dependent populations markedly expanded the scale of voluntary sector 'vendorism.'"²⁸

In *Partners in Public Service; Government-Nonprofit Relations in the Modern Welfare State*, Lester M. Salamon has also found that, historically, the American public sector has worked hand-in-hand with the nonprofit sector in the field of social welfare. According to Salamon, whenever the government has stepped up its activity in providing support for the poor, private nonprofits have flourished. He points to the enormous growth of government intervention in social welfare in the postwar era and the concomitant success of nonprofits in this area as proof that the public and private sectors in America are

27 Jennifer Wolch, *The Shadow State: Government and Voluntary Sector in Transition* (New York: Foundation Center, 1990), p. 49-50

28 Wolch, p. 53

enmeshed in a symbiotic, mutually beneficial relationship. Salamon warns that the widespread belief that the public and private sectors are engaged in a zero-sum game has led to public policy choices that will have grave consequences for our society's ability to provide the needed level of services to the poor.

Many observers of the American welfare state have failed to notice the unique way in which it operates compared to the typical Western welfare state; they have failed to account for the intricate web of connections between government programs and the non-profit organizations which depend on these programs for a substantial amount of their funding. Writes Salamon, many observers make the faulty assumption that the growth of social programs in the United States has resulted in a "large bureaucratic state, hierarchic in structure and monolithic in form," which has taken on "social functions previously performed by other social institutions."²⁹ This assumption grows out of a failure to recognize the fundamental differences between the European model of government, in which governmental institutions tend to dominate over private, voluntary institutions, and the relatively decentralized and federal American model, in which power has always been shared, not only between the federal and the state and local governments, but between government and private sector organizations. Contrary to the commonly held assumption that federal programs involve the central government as both the provider of funds and direction and the deliverer of services, the national government has always "turned extensively to other institutions--states, cities, counties, universities, hospitals, banks,

29 Salamon, p. 37

industrial corporations, and others.”³⁰

This form of “third-party government” has often relied on the non-profit sector as a deliver of services. They are the most natural candidates to participate in this system because, “Far more than private businesses, these organizations have objectives that are akin to those of government,” often dedicating themselves to the provision of collective goods that are frequently not provided by the market system. And, because in a wide range of fields nonprofit organizations were on the scene before government arrived, “It was therefore frequently less costly in the short run to subsidize and upgrade the existing private agencies than to create wholly new governmental ones.”³¹ As Salamon points out, growth of government programs has not resulted in a real increase in the size of the federal bureaucracy, as the number of federal employees per 1,000 people in the population actually declined by 10 percent between 1954 and 1979. Instead, the federal government has relied on the other sectors of society, including the non-profit sector, to carry out these programs.³²

Thus, although according to widespread beliefs that the social welfare programs of the New Deal and Great Society effectively displaced voluntary agencies in the United States and led inevitably to their decline, in fact, “the voluntary sector has retained a vital, indeed growing, role in the American welfare state. It has done so, moreover, not in spite

30 Salamon, p. 41.

31 Salamon, p. 42-43.

32 Salamon, p. 19.

of government but, to an important degree, because of it."³³ Salamon therefore insists that it would be a mistake to cut government social programs in the expectation that voluntary initiatives would replace these programs with something better.

Salamon's work has led him to propose an alternative to Weisbrod's "market failure/government failure theory of government–nonprofit relations. In Salamon's "Voluntary Failure" theory, turning to voluntary organizations, rather than government, is the primary response to market failure. People will seek a voluntary sector response to a problem or need before turning to the government because voluntary action is easier to achieve--a handful of individuals can generate a voluntary–sector response on their own, without the need to arouse public opinion and assemble a majority which must be achieved to get government to act.³⁴ But for various reasons, needs may prove impossible to fill through voluntary associations. It is only after "voluntary failure" occurs that government is resorted to.

According to Salamon, the strengths and weaknesses of government and the voluntary sector are complementary. The government can leverage the funds, ensure that services are available to all, and respond to the preferences of the populace. But voluntary organizations are in a better position than government to personalize the provision of services, to operate on a smaller scale, and to adjust care to the needs of clients. And there is enough competition within the voluntary sector to pressure voluntary organizations to

33 Salamon, p. 33.

35 Salamon, p. 44

perform well and efficiently. This implies a positive relationship between government activism and nonprofit activity.

Empirical studies have upheld Salamon's "partners in public service" argument over the "crowding out" thesis of Glazer and Olasky. For example, John W. Mohr and Francesca Guerra-Pearson studied how the influx of federal money during the New Deal affected nonprofit organizations operating in the social welfare sector in New York City. The authors note that some categories of agencies were excluded from participating in federal programs, including those that disbursed direct relief moneys to the unemployed, and others served client populations not targeted for federal relief efforts, including organizations providing institutional care for dependent children, convalescents and the aged. A second group of agency categories, including children's health service organizations and family services organizations, were able to benefit from New Deal programs, as federal funds were provided to hire professionals who worked either directly or in collaboration with non-profit organizations to deliver a vast array of community and social welfare services to huge numbers of people.

Mohr and Guerra-Pearson find that those organizations excluded from participating in federal programs or whose client populations were not targeted by the federal programs "suffered the most severe setbacks," as measured by the number of agencies that survived, while "those organizations that were included as partners in the federal programs managed to survive and even to prosper." Conclude the authors, "these findings contradict Olasky's argument that non-profit organizations operate in competition with public organizations as

part of a zero-sum game where the expansion of federal activism leads to a contraction of charitable action. Instead, we find support for Salamon's thesis that the relationship between these two sectors is symbiotic."³⁵

But while Salamon's points are extremely incisive and revealing, he leaves a great deal of room for a "crowding out" theorist to acknowledge his argument yet continue to believe that government activism on social welfare inhibits private action. Salamon's argument is that government activism promotes private action through a "rich interplay of cooperative relationships between the voluntary sector and the state,"³⁶ which amounts to a direct funding relationship. For those who believe in getting government out of the way to allow private charity to assume a greater role, the direct funding relationship between government and non-profit organizations does not represent the promotion of *real* charity, or *real* volunteerism, or even *real* civil society. It represents an extension of government programs through non-profit as well as other types of organizations which, in the administration of these programs, essentially become operatives of the state.

Marvin Olasky criticizes not only the new programs of the Great Society in the 1960's, which, he asserts, focused on the material needs of the poor at the expense of neglecting the root problems of the poor which had led them to these circumstances, but also a change which these programs caused in the universe of private social welfare

35 John W. Mohr and Francesca Guerra-Pearson, "The Effect of State Intervention in the Nonprofit Sector: The Case of the New Deal," *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, vol. 25, no. 4, December 1996.

36 Mohr and Guerra-Pearson, p. 3.

organizations. "The key governmental units...were one thousand 'neighborhood service centers' funded by the Office of Economic Opportunity and devoted to disseminating the belief that welfare payments were tokens of freedom that should be seized with a bulldog grip....The goal was material goods for all, without regard to the causes of destitution....Three fourths of OEO's community action programs were operated by settlement houses, family service agencies, and other traditional private social agencies, as well as by newly created ghetto organizations. Some of the older groups at one time had embraced principles of mutual obligation, but under OEO prodding they prepared handbooks, which instructed welfare recipients to take as much as they could get without any obligation on their part...."³⁷

Thus, the growth of the non-profit community in the 1960's and 70's, for Olasky as well as for Salamon, was primarily a result of a direct funding relationship between government and the non-profit sector. For Olasky, this relationship corrupted the non-profit sector and--as noted earlier--completed the corruption of the concept of compassion itself. Instead of being a feeling expressed by getting involved in the lives of those who are suffering and working with them to help them rise from their circumstances, compassion became a superficial feeling, one which could be overcome by sending a check.

For Olasky, then, the intensive growth of the charitable community over the past several decades does not reflect a growth in true compassion; instead it reflects the expansion of the governmental welfare state which has funded the creation of new charities

37 Olasky, p. 175-76.

and which has turned old charities into government's adjunct in fulfilling governmental objectives. And the crisis that Salamon fears will result in the non-profit sector from a retrenchment of government social programs is merely further evidence that what Salamon is talking about is not real charity, but a mere extension of government programs that do not perform real acts of compassion. For Olasky, the problem is not one of quantity, but one of quality--if government defunds the non-profits that have become its adjuncts, these organizations will turn to or will be replaced by "real" charities; ones that involve real volunteers who want to show real compassion and a willingness to suffer with the suffering, to work closely with them to find solutions to the problems causing their poverty and to help them improve their lives. This sort of charity will primarily address not the material needs, but the root causes that are hindering people's ability to meet their material needs on their own.

Moving the Argument Over the Relationship of Governmental Activism and Volunteerism to a Different Nexus. While Salamon and Olasky appear to have profoundly contradictory views about the relationship between government activism and the non-profit, voluntary community, their arguments share a common shortcoming. By taking for granted that voluntary effort (or more accurately in the case of Salamon, non-profit efforts that include volunteers) potentially exists and will be manifested under certain circumstances, they both fail to take into account the actual motivations that lie behind volunteerism. Salamon assumes that government relates to voluntary activity only to the extent that it funds such activity, and that people will come out to volunteer as long as a funding stream

exists that allow non-profit agencies to run programs that creates volunteer opportunities. Olasky assumes that people will be willing to come out to volunteer only if government gets out of the way. Neither takes into account the ways in which choices of public policy may affect the attitudes of people throughout the society, including those who may potentially be volunteers. But it is necessary to do this, for if we agree that volunteerism is an important societal value that should be maintained--providing people in need with unique and valuable types of help that government cannot provide, building bridges among people and groups, and promoting an active and vigorous civil society that is vital to a healthy democracy--then we need to understand the effects that certain types of public policies may have on the public attitudes that underlie volunteerism. We need to know, for example, whether getting government "out of the way" will provoke a change in public attitudes that will lead people to take the step to volunteer, or whether it will drive people away from volunteering. And we need to know whether government involvement in addressing certain issues or problems may provoke attitudes in potential volunteers that will in fact drive them away from volunteering at the same time that it funds non-profit activity.

My own argument goes well beyond siding with any of the theorists discussed in this chapter, all of whom ignore the attitudes and motivations of actual volunteers and the possible impact public policy may have on these motivations. It moves the argument to another nexus--using individual volunteers and contributors as the units of analysis. It asks whether there are certain attitudes that are prerequisites for volunteering, whether there are certain motivations that are common to volunteers, and whether these attitudes and

motivations may be susceptible to changes in public policy and the public rhetoric that surrounds these changes.

In other words, actions and words of governmental actors (and politicians seeking governmental office) can affect people's attitudes. They can lead us to perceive an issue as important, can draw our attention to a problem, can legitimate a cause, can raise sensitivity to the problems that face segments of the population. On the other hand, governmental and political actors can choose to ignore certain issues and problems, or deliver policies and rhetoric that tell us that a particular problem or issue is not really important enough to merit governmental action, or that the concerns held by a segment of the population are not society's concern, or that the problems faced by certain people are their own responsibility and that there is nothing society or government can or should do except to force them to take responsibility for their own circumstances. One way or another, political leaders provide leadership, and people follow.

So when we attempt to address the question of the relationship between government and voluntary action, it is necessary to go beyond the Salamon and Olasky arguments. If we want to examine whether greater or less governmental involvement in helping people who are poor will lead to greater or less voluntary involvement in helping people who are poor, then we must first examine volunteers themselves and learn what makes them tick; what their motivations for volunteering are. If we learn what motivates people to volunteer, we can then analyze these motivations and figure out which sorts of governmental actions or words these motivations are susceptible to.

The Active Government--Active Communities Theory

Salamon, Wolch, Skocpol, and Mohr and Guerra-Pearson all argue that, contrary to those who believe in the "crowding out" thesis, the non-profit sector tends to grow during periods of expansion of government provision of social services. The argument made by all of these observers is about funding--non-profit organizations grow in number, size, and activity when government is more active because government tends to contract with private agencies to provide a great deal of services. We will make a grave mistake in public policy if we reduce the level of services provided by government with the expectation that there will be a resultant outpouring of private agencies and volunteers to fill the void, because, while increasing the number of people who will need to depend on the non-profit sector for services, we will at the same time be cutting back the funding of the organizations in the sector, actually reducing the amount of private agency help available for the increasing number of people who will need social welfare services.

But this argument is a narrow one that does not truly contradict or disprove the "crowding-out" thesis, whose proponents regard the explosion of the non-profit sector over the past half century not as exemplary of their concept of volunteerism, but as a simple extension into communities of government programs. The agendas of organizations that receive, or are created as a response to the availability of, government grants to fund most of their operations are essentially designed by government. These agencies are not indigenous to the communities they serve, do not carry the true benefits of independent, private initiative by members of a community to solve the problems in the community.

They do not build ties within communities, nor do they exhibit the necessary level of compassion and involvement in the lives of the people in need of assistance. They focus on provision of services by professional staffs rather than volunteers.

It can still be argued by "crowding out" theorists such as Glazer and Olasky, therefore, that if government got "out of the way," certainly some of these organizations would have to reduce services or go out of business. But these organizations, which are essentially surrogates for the government itself, would be replaced by an outpouring of more genuine voluntary action--action performed by caring individuals, that exhibits true compassion, that serves the interest of the individuals served and the community rather than the interests of social service professionals and the government, that is more innovative and creative and able to tailor services to the needs of their clients, that are willing to be judgmental and demanding of their clientele to do the things necessary to get out of poverty. These organizations, instead of being an extension of government, would be an extension of the traditional institutions of the community--family, church, and neighborliness.

My own argument will go further than that of the "partners in public service" school, and will actually challenge the "crowding out" view of government-charity relations. The effect government activism has on the non-profit sector and volunteerism, I argue, is not merely one of direct funding, but of fostering a general atmosphere in which attitudes toward people in need are compassionate, in which larger numbers of people will feel a responsibility to engage in helping behavior. Thus government activism does not only promote the existence of private agencies directly responsible for carrying out government

programs; it also creates in people a frame of mind that they should work to help others in general, and thus promotes genuine, compassionate voluntary action. As I noted in the introductory chapter, it does so both by publicizing and calling attention to problems, and therefore provoking people to think about getting involved; and by defining the problems as social in nature, and therefore making people feel that they, as members of society, share some sense of responsibility to help address the problem. In the process, government actions can promote compassionate attitudes in society, or set a mood in which feel sympathy, or even empathy, rather than hostility toward people who are in need, and can thus help to create an atmosphere in which it simply feels good to help strangers who need help.

This theory is based on the ideas of several theorists about the relationship between elite discourse and popular opinion. In particular, John R. Zaller has demonstrated that most of us lack the direct knowledge of events and their causes that would be needed to enable us to form objective opinions and attitudes about public affairs on our own. Therefore, we are dependent upon elite discourse to gain cues and perceptions upon which to form opinions and attitudes. It is through the media that we gain this information, but, by necessity, the media must make certain decisions about what information to present and how to present it. The information presented is that which is deemed "newsworthy," and "reporters will regard as newsworthy that which their 'legitimate' sources say is newsworthy."³⁸ Even when journalists are able to observe an event directly, they must decide what about the event is

38 John R. Zaller, *Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*, (Cambridge University Press: 1992), p. 315.

important, and how to explain the event to a mass public. This is an act of interpretation, and journalists are reluctant to offer their own interpretations, so a great deal of reporting is reporting of the opinions of attributed sources as to what occurred and as to the meaning of what has occurred. "There is, in sum, reason to believe that the press is to a considerable degree dependent on subject matter specialists, including government officials among many others, in framing and reporting the news."³⁹

Thus, what the media covers, and how it presents what it covers, is driven by what government officials and experts consider to be important, and how these elites interpret events. Public opinion, as expressed in opinion polls, is "a function of immediately accessible 'considerations' where the flow of information in elite discourse determines which considerations are salient." For example, during Ronald Reagan's first presidential campaign, he called a great deal of attention to claims that the United States military had become insufficiently armed and prepared. For a period of time, a large number of stories in the print and electronic media focused on these claims, investigating military preparedness with an emphasis on looking for evidence of the candidate's claims. Popular opinion polls during that period showed that most Americans believed the country needed to increase defense spending. However, once Reagan was president and proposed massive increases in military spending, a great deal of opposition to the increases arose in Congress, and the media presented a stream of investigations into claims about a bloated military that spent its budget wastefully. Within a year, support for greater spending fell by more than 30 percent.

39 Zaller, p. 319.

Among other examples, Zaller notes how elite discourse on race has affected public opinion since the 1930s. In particular, "in late 1963, the Democratic Party, overcoming the resistance of its Southern wing, stepped out as the party of racial liberalism, while the Republican Party became the more racially conservative party. Suddenly, "rank and file Democrats and Republicans began in 1964 to exhibit substantial amounts of party polarization on racial issues—the result, it would seem, of the sudden change in the structure of party leadership cues." Apparently, this rank-and-file polarization along party lines could be in part accounted for by people reshuffling party loyalties along lines of preexisting racial opinions. However, "many existing Democrats and Republicans also changed their racial opinion to accord with the new party leadership cues, which indicates a mass response to elite opinion leadership."⁴⁰

It is my contention that cues taken from elite discourse can affect not merely public opinion, but also public action. In the case of poverty in America, as on most issues of public affairs, people lack the information to develop independently an expert understanding of what causes poverty and what policies will work to alleviate poverty, at least in the absence of elite discourse to provide cues on these issues. Political rhetoric and government policy communicates messages, via the media, to the public at large as to the relative importance of this problem and how it should be interpreted.

Political rhetoric and public policy that promotes an active government response to poverty communicates to us a message—if government seeks to take responsibility for

40 Zaller, p. 12-13.

doing something about the problems of the poor, then poverty must be a societal problem. If poverty is a societal problem, then it is society's responsibility to do something about poverty, and as members of society, we as individuals are likely to feel that we should become involved in helping the poor.

However, when there is an onslaught of political rhetoric that states that poverty is an individual problem caused by irresponsible and immoral behavior, and when public policy reflects these beliefs by reducing benefits and services to the poor, many people will learn from this rhetoric and policy that the problems of the poor are their own fault. It appears illogical that large numbers of people would want to help others whom they perceive as at fault for their own problems.

In other words, active public policy toward the poor that concentrates on solving the problems poor people face, or societal problems that cause poverty, will foster an atmosphere in which people look sympathetically toward the poor, while public policy that says the poor are to blame for their own problems will foster an atmosphere in which people are unsympathetic to this population and are unwilling to help them.

It is possible to look at this relationship from another direction. Let us say that the public is in a mood in which a majority of people are resentful of the poor, resentful of paying hard-earned wages in taxes that go to help people whom they perceive as lacking the initiative or sense of responsibility to support themselves and their families. A population in such a mood will both elect leaders who promise to do less to help the poor, and will also be unwilling to go out on their own to help the poor as volunteers. But a population that

believes poverty is caused by societal inequities and is sympathetic to the poor will both elect officials who promise to help the poor through public policy and will be willing to volunteer personally to help.

Any alternative to what I have just stated appears illogical. It does not seem that the public at large, having developed an attitude one way or the other about a significant problem affecting a large percentage of Americans, would be so discerning as to want something done about this problem but not want government do address it. If people feel compassionate, they will express that compassion both with their votes and with their personal behavior. Society is either compassionate, or it is not.

CHAPTER THREE: WHY DO PEOPLE VOLUNTEER?

For several reasons stated previously, I contend that when government is more active in the provision of social welfare and in fighting poverty, there is likely to be a higher level of private volunteerism and philanthropy in this area than when government is doing less for people in need. How do we prove such a theory? It would be fraudulent to state that I am going to *prove* this theory with absolute certainty in the chapters ahead, even more so to state that I am going to fully explain the causality that might be at work if this theory is true. However, it is possible to provide *a good deal of strong evidence* to indicate the probability that this is true, and to *suggest* causality.

My choice for the place to begin this investigation derives from my belief that most of the observers who have previously posed relationships between what government does and how willing people are to work as volunteers have left out of their analyses an attempt to understand what should be the most obvious unit of analysis--the volunteers themselves. For example, Olasky, Glazer, and Tanner all argue that there is a latent force of compassionate people who would be anxious to volunteer to help people in need, if only governmental attempts to address the problems of people in need did not make them take for granted that government is going to do the work, and if only the size and extent of government efforts did not create "compassion fatigue" on the part of the potential volunteers. If only government would get out of the way, these potential volunteers would

manifest their compassionate instincts and come out to help.

Thus, these “crowding out” theorists base the expectation that less government activism will lead to more voluntary initiative on a set of untested assumptions about the very people whose behavior they are trying to predict. They assume that people volunteer because of their perceptions of the level of need and because of their perception of what is already being done for their potential clientele. Only if these assumptions are correct will the “crowding out” theorists’ predictions about American charitable behavior in the face of government social program cutbacks be true; only if their assumptions are correct will the expected outpouring of voluntary effort materialize.

In order to understand how government actions might affect people's willingness or desire to volunteer, then, we must learn about volunteers themselves. What really drives them to sacrifice their own time and energy to help strangers? Is their action driven by a perception of a high level of need? By a belief that government or society in general is not doing enough to help certain people? By a sense of responsibility as members of society? Are they drawn to volunteerism by a constellation of motivations that could, potentially, be affected by government policy—by the example of compassion set by governmental leaders, by rhetoric that might affect their level of sympathy and ability to identify with those they might seek to help? Only if we know these things can we begin to predict whether people will be more or less likely to make the decision to volunteer in the face of cutbacks or increases in government programs and government attention to the problems of people who are in need.

I have attempted to provide some evidence from which we can begin to formulate realistic expectations of volunteer behavior in the face of changes in government policies and political rhetoric by conducting a survey of volunteers and a series of interviews with administrators of volunteer programs in my own backyard—New York City. Using contacts in the non-profit community in New York City, I was able to survey over 350 volunteers in the field of direct social services provision primarily to people who are economically disadvantaged. What I learned from this survey, I believe, will provide some very significant clues about volunteer motivations and the types of external factors to which these motivations are susceptible, which will help us to draw some conclusions as to how realistic the “crowding out” theory is, as well as testing my own expectation that active government policies will tend to foster greater volunteerism by affecting people's attitudes. But before I begin to present the data from my survey, it is important to consider some of the trends in volunteerism today and some contemporary theoretical perspectives that have attempted to explain volunteerism.

The Volunteer Fad. Volunteerism has been highly publicized as an increasingly popular activity in the United States in the 1990s, led by the cheerleading of government. The number of volunteers in this country appears to have increased accordingly throughout the past decade, but the pattern of growth has not been continuous. According to periodic polls conducted by the Gallup Organization beginning in 1987, 45.3 percent of adult Americans volunteered. This number increased to 54.4% in 1989, and then began to decline during the recessionary period between 1989 and 1993, to 51.1 percent in 1991 and 47.7

percent in 1993, before beginning to increase during the economic growth of the past few years, reaching 48.8 percent in 1995 and a record 55.5 percent in 1998. The current supposed boom in volunteerism, then, is a very recent phenomenon--only in the past five years has survey data on volunteerism indicated a surge past the level reported before the recession that began at the end of the 1980s. And, despite the steep rise in the portion of the population volunteering in the past few years, the depth and extent of this rise is questionable. While the number of volunteers has grown, the amount of effort being contributed by the average volunteer has been shrinking. The average volunteer in 1987 reported volunteering 4.7 hours per week, a number which declined to 4.0 in 1989, then hovered at around 4.2 hours per week in 1991, 1993, and 1995, and dropped to 3.5 hours per week 1998. The total number of hours contributed by volunteers has hardly changed over this period, as the increase in the number of volunteers has been matched by a decrease in the amount of time that volunteers contribute; volunteers contributed 19.6 billion hours in 1987, a number which increased to 20.3 billion hours in 1995 before falling back to 19.9 billion hours in 1998. In terms of the actual amount of voluntary effort in the United States, as measured in hours contributed, the concept that voluntarism is a fad appears to be a myth. But perhaps not. According to the *American Heritage Dictionary*, a "fad" is a "a fashion in dress, behavior, or speech that enjoys brief popularity." The word denotes a rather shallow phenomenon. A rise in the number of people volunteering, combined with a drop in the amount of actual time being spent volunteering by the average volunteer, may indicate an actual decline in the level of commitment to volunteering, or that while more people have gotten the impetus to volunteer, their commitment has become, on average, more shallow.

While the general perception that volunteerism is hot is questionable, the sub-field of human services volunteerism, which primarily assists people who are poor, appears to be growing more rapidly than volunteerism in general. The percentage of all volunteer assignments that are in the field of human services has risen over the past decade, from 7.3 percent in 1987 to 8.4 percent in 1995, to 9.5 percent in 1998. Between 1995 and 1998, 2.49 million volunteers entered the field of human services, a 31.9 percent increase, to a total 10.3 million human services volunteers. In 1995, 4.1 percent of the population of the United States volunteered in human services, a figure which rose to 5.27 percent in 1998.⁴¹ And it appears from my own survey of human services volunteers in New York City (which will be described shortly) that their level of commitment may not have dropped in the same manner that overall volunteer commitment has dropped—the volunteers reported working on their assignments an average of more than six hours a week. While this figure is probably inflated by a few volunteers who reported an astounding number of hours worked per week, the median was still four hours a week. While volunteerism may not be as hot a trend as is widely believed, human services has certainly become a particularly fashionable area of volunteerism over the past several years.

Who are these people who are coming out in droves to volunteer in non-profit human services provision? What is motivating them to make significant sacrifices of time and effort to lend a helping hand to perfect strangers who are suffering from hunger,

41 Figures based on *Giving and Volunteering in the United States: Findings from a National Survey*, 1988, 1990, 1996, and 1999 editions, (Independent Sector; Washington, D.C.)

homelessness, educational deprivation, drug abuse, and a host of other difficulties?

Theories of Volunteerism

The fields of sociology, psychology, and economics have provided us with numerous attempts to explain why individuals engage in charitable behavior. One common explanation has been that people have a “psychologically or socially grounded impetus of selflessness—a more or less comprehensive disregard for one’s self-interest in taking up care for others.” This once fashionable, conventional theory of altruism emphasizes “both the intentional motivation to assist others and the relative cost to the actor.”⁴²

An argument against altruism, raised to counter this conventional approach, was part of the movement in the social sciences toward explaining many social phenomena on the basis of rational choice theory: on the surface, charitable acts look like what we might call altruism, but are really “a consequence of individual rationality.”⁴³ In one version of this approach, people realize that their acts are reciprocated by others, realize that there are benefits from cooperative behavior, and thus engage in what appears to be altruism but is really action in a group’s “mutual self-interest”—they exhibit “multiperson altruism.” Another approach is that “individuals engage in philanthropic activity in as much as the personal cost of such engagement does not exceed the expected personal share in the

42 Paul G. Schervish and John J. Havens, “Social Participation and Charitable Giving: A Multivariate Analysis,” *Voluntas*, volume 8:3, p. 235-260.

43 G.S. Becker, *The Economic Approach to Human Behavior* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago Illinois, 1976), p. 284.

collective good in question.”⁴⁴ Others have expanded the notion of rational self-interest to include gratification of unfulfilled psychological needs in order to be able to include volunteering under the umbrella of utilitarian, self-interested action.⁴⁵ Robert A. Stebbins has given us the “serious leisure perspective” on volunteering. “Serious leisure” is “the systematic pursuit of an amateur, a hobbyist, or a volunteer activity sufficiently substantial and interesting in nature for the participant to find a career there in the acquisition and expression of a combination of its special skills, knowledge, and experience.” Participation in such an avocation can bring significant rewards to the individual—personal rewards (personal enrichment, self-actualization, self-expression, self-image, self-gratification, recreation, financial return) and social rewards (social attraction and group accomplishment). While volunteers “can simultaneously pursue their activities as serious leisure and make substantial contributions both individually and collectively to the functioning of the wider community,” “self-interestedness is their primary reason for volunteering” and “they remain mostly unaware of the broader social ramifications of their action.”⁴⁶

An economic approach to the motivation behind charitable behavior—both giving and volunteering—has been presented by Jerald Schiff. According to Schiff, people give

44 S. Wojciech Sokolowski (discussing Mancur Olson’s *The Logic of Collective Action*) “Show Me The Way to the Next Worthy Deed: Toward a Microstructural Theory of Volunteering and Giving,” *Voluntas*, Volume 7:3, p. 260.

45 E. Howarth, “Personality Characteristics of Volunteers,” *Psychological Reports*, No. 38 (1976), p. 855.

46 Stebbins, “Volunteering: A Serious Leisure Perspective,” *Non-Profit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, June 1996, p. 211.

as a way of "purchasing" an increase in a desired charitable output. They choose to volunteer time and effort instead of, or in addition to, contributing money as a way to overcome imperfect information about how charity dollars are being spent. When one contributes money, he or she may feel unsure of whether the dollars are being properly used to achieve the desired charitable output. But when one volunteers, one purchases with the cost of one's labor a specific output--the output of one's own voluntary labor, and therefore knows what he or she is getting. People contribute money or volunteer in order to provide certain services when they are "undersatisfied" with government's output of these services. Thus, givers and volunteers are assumed to start out with a specific goal to address a specific need.

Schiff's perspective is strongly pro the "crowding out" concept, for the more government does, the less "undersatisfied" people are, and the less they give. How close this relationship comes to being a one-to-one trade off depends on how directly substitutable the particular charitable service in question is to what government could provide. In this conception, the services provided through giving and volunteering are "collective goods," which people contribute to when they believe they will be better off if the services are provided, even if they are not among the direct recipients of the service.⁴⁷

Schervish and Havens, among other theorists, have found a way of thinking about the motivation of volunteers that does not force us "to choose between the ideal of pure

47 Jerald Schiff, *Charitable Giving and Government Policy: An Economic Analysis* (Greenwood Press: New York, 1990).

selflessness and the reality of self-interest." It is "the type and degree of empathetic identification with the needs of others" that "generates philanthropic commitment." Thus, "instead of investigating the mobilizing influence of the absence of the self, it is more fruitful to investigate the presence of the self and, in particular, the factors inducing the identification of self with the needs and aspirations of others." It is a feeling of "we-ness" or "the sense of being connected with another or categorizing another as a member of one's own group" that is a "central determinant of helping and results from the combination of personal beliefs and associational ties that brings the needs of others into one's purview."⁴⁸

To support this construct, the authors look at the results of the 1994 *Giving and Volunteering in the United States*, based on a national survey of volunteers and non-volunteers commissioned by the organization Independent Sector and conducted by the Gallup Organization. The survey asked respondents whether they were volunteers and found strong correlations between the answers to this question and their answers to a series of questions that relate to social connectedness: the respondents who said they were volunteers tended to be those who reported a longer length of residence in the community, a larger number of people living in their households, a stronger religious affiliation, a larger social network, and more time spent socializing in different types of activities. Those who were volunteers were also far more likely than those who were not volunteers to report having had examples of social responsibility set by parents, having been encouraged to volunteer by employers and others, and having been asked by others to participate in philanthropic

48 Schervish and Havens, op. cit.

behavior. Schervish and Havens find that "the basis for higher measured giving and volunteering may have less to do with generosity than with the density and mix of the network of formal and informal association within one's local community and the breadth of one's associations beyond the local level. This associational network reflects both the willingness of people to get involved as well as the obligations of involvement connected to certain types of engagements."⁴⁹

"We-ness" and Volunteerism. This notion of "we-ness", although drawn from sociology, carries various implications about the relationship of politics and government action to philanthropic behavior. For if it is a sense of social connectedness that is the main driving force behind giving and volunteering, then any force that might drive people to see others who might need assistance as different from themselves in some fundamental way, or that might cause people to think of them in disparaging terms, may drive a wedge between those who might otherwise wish to help and those who need that help. In other words, those in need of assistance might be dropped from people's conception of who "we" are.

In Chapter Five, we will see that philanthropy in the form of individual giving experienced sudden, sharp drops during the 1980 presidential campaign and the 1994 fight for control of Congress, two periods when there was a great deal of political rhetoric that may have helped to drive that wedge, at least in the minds and hearts of enough people to drive down the amount of philanthropy, especially to human services, in those years.

49 Ibid.

Unfortunately, while Schervish and Havens make a provocative and sensible argument, it is impossible to take their findings as proof of their argument because of the variables they choose to use. They use characteristics or traits of volunteers rather than looking at volunteers' attitudes, so what they are measuring may well not be the willingness of people to give or to volunteer, but merely the level of opportunities which these characteristics present (for example, being part of a larger social circle may result in a person being more likely to be asked to participate in a cause). It would be helpful to learn whether there is an actual attitudinal sense of social connectedness among givers and volunteers that exceeds the level of that sense among nonparticipants.

Giving and Volunteering in the United States does provide some attitudinal data. Both volunteers and non-volunteers are asked what motivates them, or what would motivate them, to volunteer. Respondents are given six items, and asked whether each is or would be a major motivation, a minor motivation, or no motivation. Figure 3.1 presents the findings on this question from 1996:

Figure 3.1. Motivations for volunteering

	Important Reason			Not an Important Reason		
	All	Volunteers	Non-Volunteers	All Respondents	Volunteers	non-vols
I feel compassion toward people in need	81.0%	90.3%	72.1%	13.9%	9.0%	18.6%
Volunteering allows me to gain a new perspective on things	62.0	77.7	47.2	31.3	20.8	41.3
Volunteering makes me feel needed	60.8	68.0	54.0	33.0	31.0	34.9
Volunteering is an important activity						

to the people I respect	56.3	68.5	44.6	37.1	29.5	44.3
Volunteering helps me deal with some of my own personal problems	36.8	40.2	33.5	55.9	57.6	54.2
I can make new contacts that might help my business or career	22.3	23.4	21.2	70.5	74.1	67.0

(Source: Virginia A. Hodgkinson and Murray S. Weitzman, *Giving and Volunteering in the United States: Findings from a National Survey* (Washington, D.C.: Independent Sector, 1996)

It does appear that people who volunteer are affected by the sense that their social group or other people who surround them highly value volunteerism. It does appear that a larger percentage of those who volunteer feel compassion toward those in need. (Although, on both of these questions, we don't really learn whether the respondent is more compassionate, only whether this feeling of compassion would motivate the respondent to volunteer). On the other variables on which there is a significant difference between the volunteers and the non-volunteers, it would appear that the volunteers may have learned that volunteering holds these benefits for them from performing the act itself (this is the only way they could know that volunteering gives them a "new perspective on things"); we can't know whether this is a real difference between people who choose to volunteer and those who do not, because it may be simply an artifact of the experience of volunteering.

Unearthing Volunteer Motivations Straight from the Source

In order gain a better understanding of what really motivates volunteers, I have conducted a study of people involved in the voluntary human services sector--the volunteers who give of their own time and energy to go out and help people in need and the dedicated professionals who administer non-profit programs and coordinate the volunteers'

activities-- in my own community, New York City. From them, we may learn some things about what drives human services volunteerism and the compassion that underlies it, and we may gain some clues as to their own perceptions about the relationship between governmental and individual, private compassion. This examination consisted of two parts:

Interviews with Non-Profit Administrators. I interviewed administrators of a sampling of 40 non-profit agencies involved in human services primarily for poor populations, that use volunteers in their work, to learn about the trends in volunteerism they are experiencing, the type of people who are coming out to volunteer, and the reasons the administrators hear from volunteers about why they are volunteering. (Over 400 organizations were asked to participate in this manner.) In addition, I learned about the roles these organizations play and problems they face in an atmosphere in which many of these administrators perceive (as I learned) a general sense of hostility from the local government and many members of the public toward the types of people they serve. More than four fifths of the organizations in my sample happen to receive little or none of their funding from government sources, making this a sampling mainly of organizations that presumably exercise compassion without serving as operatives of government in fulfilling goals sought by government. Although they do not necessarily seek to promote individual improvement of their clientele in the manner in which Olasky and some other conservative thinkers might wish, they do seek to help people beyond the satisfaction of immediate needs--they do encourage self-improvement in one way or another, but usually by providing opportunities for self-improvement without making the satisfaction of immediate needs contingent on

such a commitment from the client.

Survey of Volunteers. In addition, 21 of these organizations agreed to cooperate in a survey of volunteers,⁵⁰ distributing to their volunteers (or giving me the opportunity to distribute to them) a survey form asking them a series of questions about what they do, why they do it, and whether actions taken by government might have some affect on their choices of whether and where to volunteer. The results of this survey will provide insight into the effect, if any, that government actions have on the mind set of individuals in their perception of the need for individuals, including themselves, to volunteer.

Of the 351 volunteers who responded, 240 came from 20 organizations primarily involved in human services to people who are poor, or from human services programs within larger organizations that perform a variety of purposes. The remainder of the respondents were prospective volunteers who had come for interviews for volunteer opportunities either

50 The following organizations participated in the interviews. Those with asterisks also participated in the volunteer survey: Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services*, Holy Apostle Soup Kitchen, Operation Frontline, Shelter and Food for the Homeless*, Neighborhood Coalition for Shelter, Ronald McDonald House, Association to Benefit Children, We Can, Volunteer Referral Center, Children's Aid Society*, Children's Advocacy Center, Mentoring USA*, New York Foundling Hospital, Retired and Senior Volunteer Program*, Public Benefits Resource Center*, Learning Leaders, Court Appointed Special Advocates, Educational Alliance at the Sol Goldman Y*, Mayor's Voluntary Action Center*, Women In Need*, Project Renewal*, Star Learning Center*, St. Francis Xavier Soup Kitchen, Grand Central Neighborhood Services*, Family Center*, Hope Program*, New York Cares, Sponsors for Educational Opportunity*, United Jewish Appeal Federation Helping Hands Program, Goddard Riverside Community Center, Goddard Church, Dress for Success*, Catholic Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Hearts and Minds, Central Synagogue Soup Kitchen*, Victim Services, Doe Fund, Trinity Shelter for the Homeless, Staten Island Society for the Blind*, Asian Americans for Equality*, Carroll Gardens Neighborhood Women*, Fresh Air Fund, City-Wide Task Force on Housing Court, Housing Works.

with the Children's Aid Society or the Mayor's Voluntary Action Center, a New York City agency which promotes volunteerism by matching prospective volunteers with appropriate agencies on the basis of their interests and skills. All of the volunteers were field volunteers (or prospective field volunteers)—people who provide direct help to clients, rather than board members or others involved in voluntary administrative work. They were all among the “foot soldiers” of volunteerism, people who work hands-on with people in need; working in homeless shelters or soup kitchens, serving as tutors or mentors for young people who are disadvantaged, evaluating the needs of children for social services, assisting poor and elderly people in applying for and obtaining benefits to which they are entitled, conducting classes for homeless women with families, even helping women on welfare develop a wardrobe for job interviews.

The sample was diverse in terms of a variety of personal characteristics. In terms of race, 64.5 percent of the respondents were white, 12.5 percent were African American, over seven percent were non-white Hispanic, five percent were Asian, and nearly three percent were “mixed” or “other.” (The remainder chose not to answer this question.) The sample would have been more diverse with a slightly different sampling of agencies—many of the agencies that participated, most of which operate city-wide, noted that it is difficult to recruit minority volunteers because they are very often already active in very small organizations based in and geared to their communities.

Consistent with widely held assumptions about volunteers, over 70 percent of the sample was female. The respondents ranged very widely in age. In terms of religion, 30

percent of the respondents were Protestant, 22 percent were Catholic, and 26 percent were Jewish. Many of the volunteers reported being unaffiliated or "other." Only one respondent identified herself as Muslim, also an apparent consequence of the high demand for volunteers who are minorities in their own communities, in smaller, neighborhood-based organizations that consume much of the available time of many people in this category.

In accordance with the tendency of New Yorkers to be registered Democrats, 63 percent of respondents were Democrats, 14 percent were Republicans, 16 percent were independents, and the remainder did not identify themselves with one of these choices. 45 percent of the sample identified themselves as politically liberal, 45 percent called themselves moderate, and nine percent said they were conservative.

Who Volunteers in Human Services?

Many of the demographic characteristics of the volunteers in the survey are the result of the self-selection process of agency response to my requests for participation (small, community based organizations rarely responded), and it is thus impossible to draw absolute conclusions from the sample about the general population of human services volunteers. But one surprising result that can be reported is the relative youth of most volunteers in human services. The median age of volunteers in this survey was 35.5. But this includes 60 respondents affiliated with the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program, a requirement of which is that the volunteer be at least 55 years of age. Excluding this group, the median age was 30. Of all the volunteers, including those from RSVP, 38.6 percent were between 18 and 30 years of age, compared with 26.1 percent between 30 and 50, 16.5 percent between

50 and 65, and 18.8 percent over 65. (Although these results could conceivably have resulted if there was a difference in the willingness of older and younger volunteers to respond to the survey, this finding is corroborated by many of the administrators I interviewed who report that their volunteers are increasingly coming from the under 30 group.)

Volunteering appears to be becoming an increasingly important value (or at least an increasingly popular activity) in the youngest cohort. Among those between 18 and 30, 38 percent said they had volunteered previously, compared to only 23 percent of those between 30 and 50 and 21 percent of those between 50 and 65. Only those over 65 were more likely than the youngest group to be veteran volunteers, with 47 percent having volunteered previously.

Nearly all of the 77 percent of the respondents who were not retired were either working full-time or going to school. The stereotype of volunteers as retired people and housewives, if it ever was true, no longer is, at least not among my sample (although it should be noted that a sample not limited to New York City residents might yield somewhat different results). It appears that most of the respondents in this survey were extremely busy people managing to find time to volunteer in addition to handling numerous other duties. The vast majority of respondents were in white-collar careers. Wall Street was well-represented in the sample, as were teachers. There was also a significant number of students. Among the retirees, there were very few "retired housewives;" most of the retirees had retired from a white-collar career or from teaching. In addition, the retired respondents

tended to be people who had found some time to volunteer even before retirement, despite having to balance volunteer duties with work duties.

The volunteers in this sample were highly educated. 52.4 percent were college graduates (or college students expecting to graduate), and another 27.6 percent had completed or were nearing completion of graduate school. The sample was extremely diverse in terms of their reported household income.

The picture one gets is one of a relatively highly educated, white collar, liberal, active, and surprisingly young corps of volunteers in the human services field. But, once again, it must be noted that the lack of small, neighborhood based non-profits in the sample--as well as the fact that this survey was conducted in New York City--may have a significant effect on the presence of some of these characteristics in the sample.

Trends in Volunteer Demographics. Indeed, many of the agency administrators I interviewed reported that there has not only been an influx of volunteers in their organizations in recent years, but that the population of volunteers has been undergoing rapid demographic changes. The growth in volunteerism has been far from across the board: it is heavily concentrated among certain demographic groups in particular types of voluntary activities.

Mentoring and tutoring of children, and one-shot volunteer opportunities, have been particularly hot areas over the past several years. Several of the organizations where I conducted interviews are primarily mentoring organizations (which give

children and teenagers “positive, long-term contact with a single adult” who provides “intellectual nourishment, support, care, guidance, and advocacy they need to mature, discover, and learn”⁵¹) or include mentoring of children among a wide variety of services. All of the representatives of organizations that engage in mentoring or that recruit mentors for other organizations reported that they have been experiencing increased interest in this area from prospective volunteers. For example, Catholic Big Brothers/Big Sisters Volunteer Coordinator Kathryn O’Neill stated that, while the number of volunteers there has steadily risen over the years, the number has recently “shot up” to 8 or 9,000. At the New York branch of Mentoring USA, Executive Director Steven Mancini estimated that since 1997, the number of people calling with inquiries about volunteering has risen by 10 to 15 percent over what it had been previously.

At the Association to Benefit Children, which offers a wide variety of services to needy children and their families, the fastest growing of its programs is mentoring. “People are going into mentoring; it’s becoming a catch phrase,” says Volunteer Coordinator Harriet Patterson. The Children’s Aid Society had a steady number of about 500 volunteers for many years before their numbers began to grow dramatically in 1996. Between 1996 and 1999, the number of volunteers tripled, from 500 to about 1,500. According to Coordinator of Volunteers Debra Lynne, the growth has been spurred by an outpouring mainly of young professionals interested in one-to-one mentoring of children, as well as by a huge influx of people looking for one-time volunteer opportunities--fundraising events, community

51 From the America’s Promise web site.

service days, turkey distribution on Thanksgiving, and the like. In addition, at the Volunteer Referral Center, a private non-profit that matches prospective volunteers with agencies that need them, mentoring is a particularly hot area of interest. At the Goddard Riverside Community Center, which provides a wide-range of services for people in need in its community, Volunteer Coordinator Ernest Greidman states that the addition of a mentoring program is under consideration.

Like one-to-one mentoring, tutoring of individual children and teenagers is an area that has seen a great deal of recent interest from prospective volunteers. Rita Spano, Director of the Star Learning Center, which provides tutoring services to underprivileged public school students who are struggling in their courses, reported that there were consistently 60 to 70 volunteers a year up through the 1994-1995 school year. But then, "it took off about three years ago." In the 1999-2000 year, Star had 200 to 250 volunteers. Ms. Spano attributed the rise to "a great deal of talk and publicity about literacy and tutoring--television, other media, etc.," and also notes that the "America Reads" Program, created in 1994, provided a great deal of publicity to the need for volunteers in this area. Carole Kellerman, Director of Learning Leaders, which trains volunteer tutors to assist students who are struggling in the New York City public schools, reports that their volunteer force has doubled since 1990, to a current number of 9,300 volunteers. A great deal of this growth has been recent: in September 1998, for example, Learning Leaders received 219 phone calls from people inquiring about volunteering. In September 1999, they received 309 such calls. Similarly, Sponsors for Educational Opportunity, a program that matches volunteers with

students for long-term tutoring and professional mentoring relationships, has seen significant growth in its volunteer contingent in recent years.

Droves of people, mostly young, especially white-collar professionals in their 20's and 30's, have been attracted in recent times by the convenience of single-day activities that they can fit relatively easily into their busy schedules. The principal agency providing this sort of opportunity is New York Cares, which was founded in 1987 to recruit volunteers and to partner with other non-profit organizations to create one-day or short-term opportunities for these volunteers. Executive Director Kathy Behrens reports that they are attracting 4 to 5,000 new volunteers a year, and that 1998 saw by far the steepest increase since the organization's inception. Ernest Greidman of the Goddard Riverside Community Center House attributes most of the growth of volunteers in his organization to the number of people interested in one-shot opportunities. "We must have turned away 150 people this year for the holiday meals." At Children's Aid, one-time events, along with mentoring assignments, are responsible for a large part of the growth in volunteers.

Various types of non-profits are benefitting by getting teams of "one-shot" volunteers to spend a day at helping to provide their services. New York Cares, or a church, or, increasingly, a corporation, sends a team to spend a day with a group of children or in a soup kitchen. The soup kitchens have especially capitalized on these "one-shots," although sometimes they are overwhelmed by people wanting to help. Sinead Keegan, who runs the St. Francis Xavier Soup Kitchen, said that "volunteerism started picking up about five years ago, with the upswing in the economy." Frequently, they have a surplus of volunteers on

Saturdays, when meals are served, as groups from colleges, high schools, New York Cares, and churches from out of state bring increasing numbers of people looking for the opportunity to be of service. Often, the most regular volunteers--parishioners from the church--are sent away so that the one-time visitors have the opportunity to serve. Clyde Kuemmerle, Director of the Holy Apostle Soup Kitchen, also said that "Over the past couple of years, the numbers [of volunteers] are up about 20 percent." While the numbers can get overwhelming at times, "we make a strong effort to make use of every person."

A variety of organizations other than those that offer mentoring or tutoring and those that organize or benefit from "one-shot" volunteers have been seeing steep increases in their volunteer bases. Jane Gropp, volunteer coordinator for Women In Need, which provides a panoply of services for women with families who are poor or homeless, noted that while as recently as 1997 "things were pretty slow," things now are "pretty busy," with the bulk of new volunteers being "young professional people who want to volunteer evenings or weekends." Another area attracting increasing numbers of volunteers is domestic violence, an increasingly publicized problem over the past several years. At the Victim Services Agency, reports volunteer coordinator Nicole Rock, this area is attracting the most volunteers out of the organization's wide range of services; similarly, at the United Jewish Appeal Federation's "Hand-On" program, which recruits volunteers for numerous affiliated agencies, Director Elyse Slobodin has noticed an increasing interest in domestic violence, while the number of people interested in working with senior citizens has declined. Although these organizations are experiencing growth in their volunteer bases, that growth

is the result of the organizations' ability to offer convenient opportunities for people who are working full-time.

Indeed, in every organization that reported it is experiencing growth, this was wholly the result of a large influx of young volunteers. And in many of the volunteer programs that are not experiencing absolute growth--mainly because they have a limit to how many volunteers they can accommodate and are therefore doing relatively little outreach to attract additional volunteers--administrators who were interviewed stated that they have observed significant changes in their volunteer populations. At the New York Foundling Hospital, Volunteer Coordinator Jill Roberts has been finding a change in the types of people coming to volunteer. "Each year, there are more younger people. Most of the people we're interviewing are in their mid-20's to mid-30's." "In the old days, retirees were perhaps a third of our volunteers," observed Ms. Spano of the Star Learning Center. "Now, only a smattering of the volunteers are retired." "We're getting more young people than at the beginning," reports Brady Crane, Director of Grand Central Neighborhood Services. "Now, 70 percent are young professionals." At the Holy Trinity Church on the Upper East Side of Manhattan, Minister Cathie Caumano has noticed that "more people are calling than when I started (about 2 years ago). Most of them tend to be young professionals." "The people volunteering now are getting younger," said Sharon Cooper, who organizes the Central Synagogue soup kitchen. "Younger people have a different attitude toward philanthropy from older generations," remarked Carole Kellerman of Learning Leaders. "They don't want to just write a check; now they want a real involvement." Said Ms. Spano, "In the 70s, it was

still 'Lady Bountiful,' today, it's changed," as what was once more of a volunteer force of predominantly upper-class, non-working women and retirees has been gradually replaced by a new breed of what she considers younger and often more idealistic people.

Missing Out. Some organizations have missed out on the recent boom in volunteerism. These tend to be organizations that attract older volunteers. For example, the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program, dedicated to finding volunteer opportunities for retired people age 55 and up, has not experienced growth in the number of volunteers coming in, even though more organizations are coming to RSVP in search of volunteers. "We've become better known, and more organizations are seeing volunteers as a way of fulfilling the purposes of their organizations," says RSVP Director Alina Molina. Therefore, "we have hundreds of opportunities. But our biggest challenge is finding volunteers. There are not enough people to fill half the opportunities." Similarly, the Mayor's Voluntary Action Center, which attracts a large number of older volunteers, has also not experienced the sort of growth experienced by some of the organizations in this sample.

Volunteer Motivations

The main purpose of the survey of volunteers was to obtain knowledge of individuals' motivations for volunteering, and to learn whether these are the types of motivations that may be susceptible to changes in patterns of government action and political rhetoric. I took a three-fold approach to learning why people volunteer which I believe improves on the Schervish and Havens approach of looking at the traits of volunteers. The first part of this approach is that, while we can learn something by comparing characteristics

of people to their likelihood of doing a particular act, this does not really tell us why they are doing it. The best way to learn the motivations of people is to ask them, for, while it is true that people's responses may be affected by numerous factors (such as self-denial about non-altruistic motivations or a lack of full self-awareness about their own motivations), this is the only means we have, short of psychological testing to access their motivations. The second part is that we will learn more by asking an open-ended question than we will by asking a question with a limited number of possible responses from which to choose. While the best source is the horse's mouth, it is best not to put the words in it or to give the horse a limited number of possible answers, for some very important reasons that people volunteer may be missed through such a method. In this survey, the respondents were asked to choose some possible motivations from a list, but first they had the opportunity to give whatever response came to their minds. The categories of types of motivations which I developed were built around the respondents' answers, instead of trying to force the answers into preconceived categories. Most of the respondents gave multiple reasons for volunteering, and all of the reasons each one gave were recorded.

Thirdly, I have supplemented the volunteers' self-provided information with the perceptions of people who work as volunteer recruiters and coordinators--administrators in the non-profit community in New York City. While volunteers can tell us, off the top of their heads, the reasons they give in current time about why they made a decision to volunteer at some point in the past, people who have worked with volunteers over an extended length of time can add some insight--they can confirm whether these are

motivations they hear from volunteers when they start, and they can give us some perspective as to whether the motivations mentioned by volunteers are long-standing or whether they represent changes in the reasons that people are coming out.

Note on Interpretation of the Survey Responses Before looking at the particular reasons respondents gave for their decisions to volunteer, it should be noted that, in order to categorize their responses into meaningful results, some interpretation was necessary. For example, one thing that many respondents alluded to was a desire for a sense of community. The answer "to be part of my community" clearly falls into this category. However, not all the answers were so easy to categorize. For example, one wrote "to be part of something," a response which I placed in the "community" category because it seemed to represent the value of or longing for community, even though the word was not used. An answer such as "I would like to give back to my community and promote a sense of healthy self-esteem in other African American children," presents other issues of interpretation. First, it cites a variety of reasons for volunteering: 1) "giving back"--words used by many of the respondents, which carry the implication of a sense of having been fortunate, or having gotten something from society and a sense of duty to return the favor; 2) helping "African American children," which goes into the category of "identification," or the desire to help people with whom the volunteer shares a common background. But what about placing this answer in the "community" category as well? My inclination was to include her under "community" as well, since the way in which she uses the word implies she is conscious of the idea of community in explaining why she volunteers. Finally, a category of "values" was

created for those who cited this as a reason for volunteering. Doesn't this respondent clearly express a sense of values in her response? My inclination as an interpreter of this answer was not to place it under values, because it is not directly mentioned or clearly implied. But had she said that she "should" give back to the community, or that she "believes in" giving back to the community, this would have implied a value--she wants to do it clearly because she has learned and taken to heart something deeper than is implied by the expression "I would like to...."

With these issues of interpretation of individual answers in mind, the following is an outline of the respondents' answers to the open-ended question, "Why did you decide to volunteer?" (Or Why do you want to volunteer?", for prospective volunteers):

1. Altruistic Motivations

To Help Others/To Do Some Good. The most common response was simply that the individual wanted to help other people. As noted above, most of the respondents gave multiple reasons to volunteer, and many people who wanted to do good had other reasons as well--the sense that they have been fortunate, a sense of social obligation, a sense of personal fulfillment. But 29 percent of the respondents mentioned this reason for volunteering alone or separately from other reasons.

Respondents expressed this solely altruistic purpose in a variety of ways. Some simply wrote, "to help others," "to be helpful," "the opportunity to do some good," "to help in a meaningful way," "desire to serve," "to be of service," "to contribute to society," or "I

wanted to pitch in." Others implied that this sort of pure altruistic motive was behind their decision to volunteer: "I have time in the afternoon that I would like to share with anyone in need of assistance," "I feel I can contribute to the quality of life of people," "I want to contribute something in the benefit of society," and "the idea of helping to improve a human being" were among these sort of responses.

While many of the responses in this category also discussed how helping fulfills a personal psychological need, or discussed a specific issue they were interested in, or expressed how they enjoy the work they do, etc. (and their answers are thus included under those categories as well), they all made this expression of altruism a separate part of their response.

To Give Back/Been Fortunate. "Giving back" may seem a cliched reason that people volunteer, so it is not surprising that this was the second most common motivation, mentioned by 16.7 percent of the respondents. Many of those who gave this answer combined it with the idea of community: For example, one respondent wrote, "I'm interested in giving back to the community," or "giving back to the community is very important." Some used the expression "to give back to society," and quite a few mentioned that they feel fortunate about the opportunities they have been given. In some of the responses, I took the expression of a sense of having been fortunate as implying a desire to "give back." For example, a 31 year-old professional woman working as a mentor of a child through the Children's Aid Society wrote, "I feel fortunate to have received a very good

education and to have a very happy marriage, and I wish to help others who have been less fortunate to improve their own lives." The reason such an answer implies "giving back" is that mentioning her own good fortune as a motivation for volunteering indicates that the person feels her community or society has been in some way good to her, and that she should return the favor. Certainly, the element of a sense of guilt is perhaps behind this belief, but also perhaps this is an expression of one's deeply held value that one who has benefitted ought to contribute.

Possession of Skills or Abilities that may Benefit Others: The 6.5 percent of respondents who gave an answer along these lines were difficult to place into a broader category, but were included under altruism because they represent a desire to use one's skills for the benefit of others. Many of those who gave an answer in this category gave no other reasons for volunteering, simply stating that they have certain skills or experience.

Asked the reasons they hear from new volunteers about the reason they want to volunteer, many of the administrators I interviewed confirmed that the basic desire to help others, expressed in any variety of ways, is the fundamental driving force that brings out most people. "Any person who volunteers is doing it at least in part out of a desire to make a difference in other people's lives," said Harriet Patterson of the Association to Benefit Children. Many of the people who volunteer in tutoring and other activities run by the Educational Alliance at the Sol Goldman Y in the East Village are simply "good spirits" according to volunteer coordinator Abby Schweitzer. "They want to spend their time

helping." At the Children's Advocacy Center, according to volunteer coordinator Jessica Orol, it is "the pleasure of being helpful" that brings out volunteers. According to Brady Crane at Grand Central Neighborhood Services, the vast majority of people who volunteer to provide a wide variety of services for homeless men do not mention a desire to help the homeless in particular, but simply "have a sense of giving and caring, and want to help people who need help." Jon Bunge, Director of Project Hope, a Brooklyn non-profit that helps former drug addicts obtain job skills and assists them in putting their lives together in a variety of ways, said that instead of talking about these problems, many volunteers simply say "I want to help others," or "It's a good feeling to help," or "I can help with my experience." At the Goddard Riverside Community Center, a wide-ranging social services agency designed on the model of the settlement house, volunteer coordinator Ernest Greidman said that for many people, helping others is simply "a way of expressing themselves." Said Kathy Behrens of New York Cares, many of the volunteers have no motivation other than that they are "completely altruistic."

The desire to "give back" is a sentiment that volunteer coordinators often hear from new or prospective volunteers. When asked about their motivations for wanting to participate at Victim Services, "I want to give back is the standard answer," according to volunteer coordinator Nicole Rock. At Project Renewal, people who volunteer to provide tutoring for homeless men "say they want to give back, or they've had help in their lives and now want to do something for someone else," according to Executive Director Karen Davis. At Women In Need, volunteer coordinator Jane Gropp says this sort of motivation is most

common among the more affluent volunteers. "They say they are grateful they've had an easier life and want to help." Added Sinead Keegan of the St. Francis Xavier soup kitchen, the economic upswing of the nineties has led to more people wanting to share their good fortune; "they say, 'the market's been great to us this year. We ought to give back."

2. Personal Fulfillment.

Personal Enjoyment. Two closely related categories were personal enjoyment, mentioned by 13.7 percent of the respondents, and personal satisfaction or fulfillment, mentioned by 13 percent.

Under, "enjoyment" were answers such as "I always enjoy doing things for people, children, the community, etc.." "I love children," "I like connecting with people, animals, and the environment," "I like to help people and I like to work," "I'm familiar with the clients and enjoy working with them," "I enjoy spreading happiness," or simply, "I like it." Several respondents spoke of missing something they used to enjoy: "I was formerly an English teacher. I miss the students and the experience," or "It's been a while since I worked with children. I miss their energy and innocence"

It is a thin line between enjoyment and satisfaction: the line drawn here was a between the expression of "liking" something or finding something "interesting" and a statement such as "it makes me feel good," a somewhat more psychological sort of motivation.

Personal Satisfaction or Fulfillment. Among answers in this category were "it feels good," "just for my satisfaction," "personal enrichment," "it is very rewarding," "it makes me feel better about myself," "I feel a sense of self-completion when I help others," "to minimize my guilt," and "it enables you to look at yourself in the mirror." Often, the motivation of personal satisfaction or fulfillment was implied as the flip side of the simple desire to do good by expressing the desire to help others as a personal need: for example "For the need to do something good for others," or "for the feeling of helping others," or "I like the idea of helping others and making them feel better and in turn making my self-esteem higher." These expressions are different from the mere desire to help as an end in itself (which falls under the category of doing good); they point to a personal need to fulfill oneself or making oneself feel good, with helping others as a means to that end.

Both volunteering out of one's enjoyment of the experience or out of a desire for fulfillment may indicate that the volunteer is lacking something in his or her personal life, and seeks what is lacking elsewhere. At the Sol Goldman Y, Abby Schweitzer senses that many of her volunteers "are lonely, and want to be with other people." Some who are involved in programs that serve elderly people "are young people who miss their grandparents," while others who work in programs serving children "enjoy working with kids," but do not get the opportunity to do so in their personal lives. "They say they love children," says Jill Roberts of the New York Foundling Hospital of many of her volunteers. "A hospital full of sick children is seductive; people are drawn to that." She has volunteers "who miss their grandchildren, or who want to develop a relationship with children." Says

Abbie Bassin of volunteer mentors at the Family Center, "They want to give something back and also receive something. They want a connection, friendship, relationship with a kid who has obstacles." The sense of gratitude volunteers often receive from adults they serve in soup kitchens and other situations also may fill a psychological need missing in many people's lives. "The clientele are really appreciative," said Sinead Keegan of the St. Francis Xavier soup kitchen. "They make you feel good." Brady Crane of Grand Central Neighborhood Services referred to "immediate gratification" from the clientele as a motivation for his volunteers.

Another common psychological motivation is the need to assuage guilt. Several of the program administrators pointed to this motivation, including all of those who provide "one-shot" opportunities, which are often seen as a quick fix for people who feel guilty about being selfish in their lives. Said Ernest Greidman, "with the one-shots, there is a lot of guilt involved."

Staying Active. 10.6 percent of the respondents said one of the reasons they volunteer is to stay active. Most of the people who gave an answer in this category were retired.

"I would like to be involved and stay active," "I have a need to do something with my time," "to keep active," "to get me out of the house," and a variety of other expressions were used to explain this motivation. Often, this was combined with an expression of a desire to help, or that one ought not allow one's time to go to waste, or a desire to learn. "To be active in a needful service," wrote one volunteer, while another explained, "I'm an active senior

citizen who wants to contribute to society." Wrote one volunteer, "I recently retired. I'm used to being busy, and I want to keep my mind active. I have interests I'd like to pursue, and I feel I can contribute by volunteering." And another wrote, "I have some spare time. It can be used to help people less fortunate than me."

To Feel Useful, mentioned by 4.8 percent of respondents, is an idea closely related to the that of wanting to stay active and to a sense of personal fulfillment

The simple need to feel active or useful was referred to by many of the administrators I spoke with. For example, Elyse Slobodin of the UJA Federation's Hands-On Program said she often hears, "I have time on my hands. I should put it to good use." Jane Gropp of Women in Need noted that retired people often simply "want something to do with their time." But some younger volunteers volunteer to stay active as well, often to deal with their loneliness. "The young people don't want to be alone on the holidays," said Ernest Greidman.

Learning, essentially the idea that one can learn from the people one is helping or the experience of helping, was mentioned by 4.1 percent. Responses in this category did not refer to learning career skills, but to what might be termed "life lessons", or learning of new perspectives on life from those one is helping or the other volunteers with whom one shares the experience.

As Sinead Keegan put it, "curiosity" brings out a lot of new volunteers. "They've never been to a soup kitchen." Said Brady Crane, "It's a bridge between worlds," and

volunteers get to learn more first-hand "from the rapport, which they enjoy," than from reading about problems that exist in the newspapers.

To Do Something Different. Two-percent of the respondents, almost all from Wall Street or the financial industry, said they were volunteering, at least in part, to do something *different* from the type of work they do every day--they wanted to do something more fulfilling or more meaningful, as well as less stressful.

Many of the program administrators who were interviewed said they have noticed that increasing numbers of volunteers are young, white-collar professionals, especially from the financial industry, seeking an escape from the stress of their jobs, or to do something that compensates for a lack of emotional fulfillment from their jobs. "Each year, there are more younger people, people with high-pressure jobs," noted Jill Roberts of the New York Foundling Hospital. "Their jobs can be so heartless. They're seeking some balance." Jane Gropp of Women In Need spoke of many people volunteering "who work in the financial industry. They just don't find it satisfying." Said Karen Davis of Project Renewal, "There are people who work full time, are not finding it rewarding, and who don't have a sense that they are helping anyone" in their jobs. "They want to pay back and do something they love and give back to society." At the Star Learning Center, reported Rita Spano, a large influx of volunteers came into the after hours tutoring program right after the October 1996 stock market crash. "We've begun to see Wall Streeters ever since," and, said Ms. Spano, escape from stress is a major motivator of these people. Said Ms. Patterson from the Children's Advocacy Center, the increasing numbers of young workers have been saying, "my job is

empty.” Ms. Patterson explained, “they are seeking something more fulfilling than their regular jobs.” And Ms. Slobodin of UJA said she often hears from young working people, “I feel like something's missing in my life.”

The distinction between what might be called pure altruistic reasons for volunteering and volunteering out of a desire to fulfill certain personal or psychological needs is a difficult one to make. They are really two sides of the same coin: a person who has altruistic feelings is a person who gets a good feeling from helping others. But when the altruist expresses his or her reasons for volunteering, helping others or giving back is expressed as an end in itself, while the person who expresses a need for some sort of fulfillment expresses helping others more as a means toward this end. However, it is possible to think of a person who derives fulfillment from helping others, rather than from a more selfish pursuit, as the epitome of an altruist. For all the people in the above two categories, as Guy Paulhinas of We Can observed, volunteerism is something that “frees you from your problems. In helping someone else, you help yourself. It makes you a better person.”

3. Cause Orientation

Interest In A Particular Issue or Problem. It might be surprising to some that only 15.4 percent of the respondents said they were volunteering or wanted to volunteer because they were interested in working to address a particular issue or problem that concerned them. Among the responses that fit into this category, a volunteer helping homeless women for the organization Women In Need wrote, “I wish to make a valuable contribution toward the

mission to empower women." Another volunteer was "interested in helping mothers get jobs," and another stated, "education has always been a strong interest of mine." "I wanted to do something to help the homeless help themselves" and "I wanted to help senior citizens who are poor or disabled" are other examples of the types of statements respondents in this category made. Many of the volunteers expressed a specific interest in the needs of children. And several wanted to "help the homeless."

This is the category which includes responses of a political nature, or those who made a statement about the inadequacy of government programs or made some other specific statement about government or society in general not doing enough. But these were very few--mentioned by only six people. "Living in New York City can be very difficult," wrote one volunteer. "I was very aware of injustice and the disproportionate distribution of wealth. And unless I did something to contribute something positive, living in New York was simply depressing." Remarkd another, "I am responsible for the world I would like to live in. I would like to live in a world of empowered women and erase the negative atmosphere in which their children started out." "I've complained enough about social problems of the city," commented a third volunteer. "When I retired, I decided to do something more productive than griping."

One volunteer reported that she had "heard a lecture on the implications of welfare reform. It freaked me out. I wanted to do something that would help people affected by the cutbacks." "I always read the many problems people have and no money from the government to help," wrote another respondent. "I have a little to share and I want to share

with needy people." Another remarked, "The area of public benefits interests me and my political beliefs support my interests."

While specific causes or issues were third in number of mentioned motivations for volunteering, it is interesting that more people did not respond that they were interested in a particular cause. When asked why they volunteer, most of the respondents did not refer to the particular kind of work they did or wanted to do, but to a more general aspect of helping, personal values, or a personal psychological or practical benefit they get out of it.

Belief in the Organization, mentioned by 4.8% of respondents, is an expression of some quality about the particular organization with which one volunteers, which could be seen as closely related to the idea of volunteering because of a particular issue with which one is concerned.

Sense of Deprivation of Population being Helped. Interestingly, only 6.8 percent of the respondents gave as part of their reason for volunteering a sense that the people they were trying to help were in some way deprived or disadvantaged. While some referred to "those less fortunate," most simply spoke of helping "others," or "children," without indicating a sense that what they were doing was important because the people they were helping were mostly poor or from poor families.

In addition, the six respondents who mentioned that they have "been there," or who have experienced similar problems or situations to those they were helping, and the three who mentioned that they identified with a particular group (a minority) that they were

helping, were placed under this category of "cause orientation." The presence of volunteers who have "been there," and also those who still "are there" may be greater than indicated by this survey. Several of the soup kitchens and homeless services involved in this study have among their volunteers a number of people who are either graduates of their programs or who are in need of food themselves—they are, as Cathie Caumano of the Holy Trinity Church called them, "both givers and receivers." However, solely by coincidence, nearly all the organizations that mentioned this were not participants in the survey of volunteers.

Program administrators were more likely than the volunteers themselves to believe that interest in a particular cause or issue is a primary motivation for many people to make the decision to volunteer. Ralph Vogel, of the Neighborhood Coalition for Shelter, thought that the visibility of the problem of homelessness is a major factor leading people to volunteer in his organization. "If you're personally affected by seeing the problem, you're more likely to be involved." Ms. Patterson said that volunteerism with the Association to Benefit Children is often "a response to apathy" which the volunteers see around them. Said Steven Mancini of Mentoring USA, said that many people are volunteering in mentoring to address what they perceive as a worsening set of problems facing children. "Many people are thinking that kids need more help, schools are failing children, and the number of single-parent families is increasing." Said Rita Spano of volunteers at the Star Learning Center, "they refer to the state of education and society not doing enough. They perceive a problem out there more and more. They're often appalled."

Some administrators pointed to the attention some problems receive in the media as a factor in bringing out volunteers to their programs. Nicole Rock of Victim Services noted, "Domestic violence is a hot topic. Crime is down, but domestic violence has shot up out of nowhere. A lot of people call saying they've just watched a movie or read an article [about domestic violence] and want to know 'what can I do?' They ask to work at the battered women's shelters." Media attention to the problem of domestic violence "fuels our business." Similarly, Carole Kellerman of Learning Leaders believes that "the perception perpetuated by the media that there's a crisis in the schools," and the development of education "being identified as something deprived" is in part behind the boom in volunteer recruitment in her organization.

Every administrator who was interviewed was asked whether volunteers ever mention what government is doing or failing to do as a motivation for volunteering. Occasionally, an administrator thought that concerns about government failure to address certain problems, or cutbacks in programs to address these problems, have brought people out to volunteer. Marcella Friel of Operation Frontline stated, "Among my volunteers, there is a general sense that despite a climate of prosperity, things are very bad for people with limited incomes to feed themselves. There's a general sense that government is not responsive to the needs of low-income people. There's a general sense that there are people whose human rights and needs are not being met." Her volunteers are mostly chefs, culinary students, or other professionals in the food industry, people who may have been made particularly aware of the hunger situation in New York City by appeals to help from a

variety of charities and advocacy organizations that work on these issues.

Otherwise, nearly every administrator said that what government is doing, or what society is doing, is never mentioned by incoming volunteers as a reason for their decision to come. Even those who said volunteers are coming out because of a perceived problem or need, said the volunteers do not express a desire to make up in any way for a failing of government or society. Thus, while Ms. Patterson said that some volunteers are drawn by a perception of problems that exist, "no one has ever articulated a need to make up for inaction by government." While Jessica Orol of the Children's Advocacy Center says that many of her volunteers come out because "they want to help children in need," she says that they "never mention what society is doing. It's more of a personal thing." At the Central Synagogue soup kitchen, Sharon Cooper said, "I'm sure there are those who feel they should do this because government isn't doing it, but I never hear that. There's no relationship between what government does and what individuals are willing to do."

"We've never heard anybody say anything about society," reported Jon Bunge of the Hope Program, who has interviewed hundreds of incoming volunteers. Said Barbara Serrota of Court Appointed Special Advocates, whose volunteers regularly check up on foster homes and report to courts about the how the children are being treated, "horrible stories in the newspapers lead to calls" from individuals inquiring about how they can help. "They do see that the Administration for Children' Services isn't helping, but they don't think about it that way. They don't say anything about what government or society is doing; they basically do not focus on society." Added Elyse Slobodin of the UJA Federation,

"Occasionally, someone says, 'I see people on the street, see a problem, maybe they need my help.' But they don't mention society not doing enough." And, said Abbie Bassin of the Family Center, "Sometimes [incoming volunteers] say 'there are so many kids in need today,' but they never talk about what government is doing for them."

The Sol Goldman Y, which runs a variety of services for children and others in need, even advertises for volunteers by referring to the failure of government to provide inner-city children with an adequate education. Said volunteer coordinator Abby Schweitzer, "we mention in the flyers about how the schools are not doing the job, but you never hear [from incoming volunteers] 'nothing's being done for these people.' Nobody mentions that." At the Doc Fund, which has been controversial among the homeless services community for its support of and participation in the City's Work Experience Program and support of work requirements for people staying in homeless shelters, Executive Director Karen Urrel-Stinson says, "I've heard, 'you're doing a better job than the politicians.'" However, she adds she has never heard criticism of the job government is doing as a volunteer's motivation.

One would think that people who are moved enough to step out on their own to help address a problem might be, at least in part, driven by the idea that society, or government, or people in general, are not doing enough to help. A couple of the administrators had their own theories of why this may not be so. Kiran Gaugioso of Sponsors for Educational Opportunity believes that people who come out to help individuals are not inclined to think about larger problems. "If they were concerned about society as a whole, they wouldn't do it at such a micro-level. They'd do advocacy for change." But Ms. Patterson from the

Association to Benefit Children conceptualizes this phenomenon differently; people are aware of and concerned about larger problems, but the larger problems are hard to relate to because of their size and complexity—people more easily get their heads around helping one person at a time. “They want to know that this is what my time does. It’s proven that one person can make a difference in another person’s life, one-on-one. They can relate to that as opposed to an overwhelming problem.” Or, as Steven Mancini of Mentoring USA put it, “I don’t think anyone who volunteers does it because government is pulling out. Instead, they think, ‘I want to help that person.’”

Absence of Cause Orientation. This being said, it should be noted further that the interviewees who said that they have noticed a lot of people coming out to volunteer because of an interest in a particular cause or issue were in a small minority, and even those who did think some volunteers were coming out because of an interest in the cause said these volunteers were small in number. More frequently, the decision to volunteer is just that—a decision to contribute time to helping other people. Often, people decide to volunteer without having any idea of what they want to do, or what kind of problem they would like to address. This is a secondary decision, which many volunteers arrive at only after “shopping around” to see where they can be of the most help.

“Eight out of 10 people who call [to inquire about volunteering] are fishing,” remarked Ernest Greidman. “They don’t know what they want to do. But they want to do something.” Said Carole Friedland of the Mayor’s Voluntary Action Center, “For the past several years, the people who come to us have been on average very sophisticated. We don’t

get people who are insular. However, a lot of people always come saying they don't care what they do. They come with some vague ideas what they want to do. But most don't come with any specific sense of what they want to do." Said Abby Schweitzer of people who come in to the Sol Goldman Y, "They don't come in knowing what they want to do as a volunteer. But they usually have a particular skill they want to give. They first want to volunteer, then we throw out options. The easiest program to sell is working with kids."

As Carole Kellerman of Learning Leaders explained, first, "people make a personal decision that it is the time in their lives to volunteer; 'I've always meant to do something.'" Media attention to a particular problem does not lead people to volunteer; it merely may direct people who have decided it is time to volunteer to a particular field or cause. After they have made their decision to volunteer, "then they see our ad [perhaps the one featuring New York Mets star and Learning Leaders volunteer Edgardo Alfonzo] and say, 'I should do something like that.'" Barbara Serrota of Court Appointed Special Advocates agreed that this is the most common scenario. "They start out just wanting to volunteer; then they choose the place."

4. Philosophical Reasons

Personal, Family, and Religious Values. Personal values were among the primary reasons for volunteering for 8.5 percent of the respondents. Many of these also expressed a desire to help others, a sense of satisfaction or fulfillment they receive from volunteering, or other reasons for being involved. But they all expressed, in some way, that they feel

volunteering to help others is something they *should* do or *believe in* doing, a sense that the individual has a responsibility to others, or to society as a whole, that stems from deeply held personal values.

Some of those who expressed personal values did so in the process of mentioning their interest in "giving back" or in "community" or in simply doing some good for others. For example, "I *believe* in improving the community," "I *believe* in giving back," "giving back to community is very *important*," "my *personal belief* in giving help to others who need it."

Several people mentioned having learned volunteerism as a value from their parents: "I began as a continuation of a family tradition and to say thank you for what I have," "I was brought up to give my time to others," "because my parents taught me and I knew before that I should support other people who are less fortunate than myself." Others spoke of religious values: "To do something helpful and put Judaism into action," "to fulfill Mitzvot."

Other responses included, "it's a way of life for me," "I am responsible for the world I live in," and simply, "conscience."

Sense of Social Obligation, mentioned by 4.8 percent of respondents, is closely related to the personal values response; it is the idea expressed by the respondent that people have an obligation to help others. It differs from "personal values" because the respondent is not merely saying that he or she believes in volunteering personally, but is saying it is something that everyone should do if they have the opportunity. Among the responses in

this category were: "I think we all have an obligation to make the community we live in better," "people should help one another," "I believe we all have responsibility to create a better world," and "I feel it is an obligation that we all have." "To do my part in serving those whose lives may be improved with extra support" is a statement that implies that everyone has a part in serving in this way.

Personal History is a category for those respondents who explained why they volunteer with statements such as "I always have," or "I have volunteered since I was 13," or "it is a way of life." Many of the 4.8 percent of respondents who gave this sort of statement made it their sole explanation of why they volunteer. Because of the implication in this that volunteering is a vital element of living a good or worthwhile life, it is included under philosophical explanations.

Also included under personal values were the two respondents who pointed to wanting to follow an example set by someone they have looked up to.

Very few of the agency administrators who were interviewed noted that they see their volunteers being motivated by philosophical beliefs, but some did believe that increasing numbers of people are taking volunteerism to heart as a personal value. Some who perceived this trend expressed a belief that the phenomenon is generational. "A lot of us grew up not knowing there was something they should be doing," said Debra Lynne of the Children's Aid Society. Carole Kellerman of Learning Leaders remarked, "Younger people have a different attitude toward philanthropy from the older generation. Now, it's not enough to just write a check; now they want a real involvement." Jill Roberts of the New

York Foundling Hospital thought that holding volunteerism as an important personal value is always a prerequisite to being the kind of person who chooses to volunteer. "People who get to the point of coming here think of it as a personal responsibility."

5. Community

Reference to a sense of community was made by 11.6 percent of respondents. They tended to refer to two aspects of this sense, often simultaneously:

Contributing to the community. Many volunteers are on some level aware of the value of volunteering as a component of a vigorous "civil society." Included in this category are all the respondents who spoke of "giving back to the community," and who therefore were also included under the "giving back" category. Also here are people who expressed a desire to "get involved in the community," "to do something for the community," or to "improve the community."

Community Membership. Many respondents also expressed a desire to become or stay attached to their communities in some way. Among these answers were, "I enjoy working with people in the community," "to get to know people in my neighborhood," "I wanted to help out and become involved in my new community," and "to feel that I am part of my community." "It's a chance to be part of something," was another way of expressing this longing for community.

The sampling of non-profit administrators who were interviewed confirmed that a desire for a sense of community or an attachment to the community is a major force in bringing out people to volunteer in all sorts of human services. Some indicated that this is a growing motivation for volunteerism, largely because of the increased mobility of the population--New York City, like many places, has more new residents than ever. Many of them are young and single, and whether or not these people are volunteering in part out of their desire to make friends and meet mates, most seem to be reaching out primarily for a sense of being a part of the community. "There seems to be a higher consciousness about community, a village concept," said Debra Lynne of the Children's Aid Society. "The young, professional population is fairly mobile. They see volunteering as a way to get connected." Said Jill Roberts of the New York Foundling Hospital, "People who move here are doing this to become part of the community." Cathie Caumano added, "My sense is lots of young people have just moved here and want to be connected. They may feel awkward about joining a church [and therefore do not become parishioners], but want a feeling of helping people. Of those who call, the majority are people who are new to the city or the neighborhood." As Rita Spano of the Star Learning Center put it, "a lot of people are trying to establish roots."

But it is not just newcomers who express a desire for community. "Most of the volunteers are residents of the immediate area," said Abby Schweitzer of the Educational Alliance at the Sol Goldman Y. "They want to contribute to the community." Ernest Griedman of the Goddard Riverside Community Center said that a desire for connection to

community is a constant that will always bring out volunteers. "The political climate in the State and City has been harsh, and young people are inured to the problems, see those with problems as a bother," said Mr. Griedman. Yet, "there's an instinct in all people that they want to be part of the community. People will always help, no matter what the climate." Mr. Griedman added that he often hears volunteers say "I want to take part, I want to do something, I want to participate in my community."

6. Practical Benefits

Numerous respondents mentioned some other, more practical reason for volunteering: *Career Development*, or a desire to gain some experience or some skill that would be of benefit in their careers (mentioned by 5.5 percent of respondents); *Social Reasons*, or a desire to make friends or meet people (mentioned by four respondents); and *School Requirement*, the need to fulfill a community service requirement as part of one's education (mentioned by five respondents). Most of the people who gave one of these answers combined it with some of the loftier motivations for volunteering listed above.

Administrators who were interviewed noted an increase in recent years in the number of students coming out to volunteer because of a mandatory service requirement. A large number of administrators said that many people are volunteering to gain work experience, or because they are considering a career in social work and want to learn first-hand whether such a career is for them. An increase in this motivation for volunteering may be a result, as Debra Lynne of the Children's Aid Society observed, of "instability" in the economy--

although unemployment is low, the shape of the workforce is continuing to change rapidly, and many people continue to be displaced and are searching for new careers.

Some administrators noted that volunteering is a way to meet people, or to “socialize.” Kathy Behrens of New York Cares acknowledged that a significant number of people volunteer, at least in part “to meet a boyfriend or girlfriend.” And Ms. Lynne noted, “we’ve even had a marriage” between volunteers.

Summarizing the volunteers’ responses, we find that the following percentage of respondents gave one or more responses within each of the following categories:

Altruism:	45.7%
Personal Fulfillment:	28.3%
Cause Orientation:	20.8%
Philosophical Reasons:	16.7%
Sense of Community:	11.6%
Practical Benefits:	8.5%

Implications of volunteer motivations. While some of the respondents’ answers could have been categorized differently from the way I did, and the groupings of sub-categories into broader categories could easily have been done differently, several conclusions can be drawn from the main threads that run through most of these answers:

First, the motivation to volunteer to assist others in human services activities usually stems from a desire to help, a belief in helping, a desire to fulfill personal psychic needs by helping, and sometimes a yearning for a sense of community derived from helping. While

this may seem a painfully obvious finding, what is interesting is that most volunteers, given an open-ended opportunity to describe their reasons for wanting to volunteer, say nothing about the target group of people whom they wish to help. Most do not mention a particular problem they would like to help solve, or a sort of need they particularly want to help people with--for the most part, they don't say "hunger" or "homelessness" or "illiteracy." Only the 20.8 percent who gave responses that included an aspect of what I have termed a "cause orientation" mentioned particular areas or problems they wish to work on. It appears as though most volunteers just want to help, or believe in helping, or think they should help, people, and which people they choose to help and what they choose to do is only a secondary consideration, a decision they make after deciding they would like to volunteer.

Second, only rarely did respondents mention anything about a need that exists, or the level of need existing. The main thread is that most of those who volunteer do not jump into it in response to the perception of greater need, at least not consciously. They go into volunteering for very personal reasons, reasons that would not seem to be elastic to particular circumstances. (In fact, the absence of reference to the existing level of needs contradict's Schiff's view that volunteers are motivated by a desire to contribute to the production of a particular "charitable output.")

Third, as noted above, only six respondents mentioned anything about a sense that not enough is being done for the people they are assisting or trying to assist. One person mentioned "injustice" and the "disproportionate distribution of wealth." Another mentioned "social problems of the city." Two people referred specifically to government--one who

had heard a discussion of the potential effects of changes in welfare and was “freaked out,” another who had “always read the many problems people have and no money from the government to help.” One person noted that what she was doing suited her “political beliefs.” But, other than these few, none of the respondents referred to a lack or shortage of action being taken by society, by government, or by others to help the people they are trying to help. One might surmise from this that, because they apparently are not thinking about the level of government attention to a particular problem or need, individuals’ decisions to volunteer are inelastic to the level of government activism on public welfare.

Fourth, surprisingly (at least to this observer), a very small percentage of respondents (6.8 percent) referred at all to the state or condition of the people they were helping, to a sense that these people are deprived or disadvantaged in some way. Only the people within this 6.8 percent mentioned anything about people who are “less fortunate,” or “needy,” even though most of these volunteers are specifically working to help people who are poor or the children of poor parents. Thus, there was little sense of volunteering out of a sense of pity or feeling sorry for people. Most simply stated that they wanted to help, believed in helping, or got something out of helping “others,” or just simply “helping.” They rarely evidenced a sense of difference between themselves and the people they were trying to help.

The interviews with agency administrators confirmed that people generally do not decide to volunteer in response to external factors, at least not directly. They do not often volunteer because of a perception of the existence of a particular need, or belief in a particular cause. They volunteer because they want to help others, they want some sort of

psychological gratification, they want to be useful, they want to have a sense of community, they have a deep belief that people should volunteer to help others, or they simply want something interesting to do. The fact that people volunteer out of an expectation of these sorts of benefits should not be seen as a bad sign; it should be heartening that people can be self-fulfilled in many ways by helping others. If this is true, then we do not have to choose between explanations of volunteerism that depend on either the concept of selfless altruism or the concept of selfish motivations.

It also should be heartening to learn how absent are motivations that refer to the need of individuals, or particular problems that exist, or what society or government is doing. The relative absence of these rationales for volunteering indicates that people will volunteer in the same numbers even when particular problems that many people suffer from are not being publicized, and that people will not necessarily withdraw their own voluntary efforts when they perceive that others are doing enough, or government is doing enough. Helping is not a zero-sum game. We do not have to worry, as Schiff would have us, about a "free-rider" problem in volunteerism, because, despite Schiff's proclamation, a desire to increase the level of a particular charitable output is far from the primary goal of most volunteers.

It should also be clear, from these findings, that the predominant attitude of volunteers is not one of superiority, or pity, toward some group of "others" that is fundamentally different from the volunteers themselves. They simply, for some personal reason, have a desire to be helpers of people. There is little sense that they are trying to improve people whom they have defined as having inferior morals, or as being lazy or

irresponsible. The people they are helping are worthy of help simply because they need it; in other words, the helpers get something out of helping because they define the people they are helping as part of their extended "we," rather than as some foreign "they," and this identification is what enables the helpers to get self-gratification from helping them.

A Sense of "We-ness" Discovered. As noted previously, Schervish and Havens argue that "the type and degree of empathetic identification with the needs of others generates philanthropic commitment." We are likely to help other people when we have developed a sense of "we-ness" with them; when we have in a psychological sense defined others as being in a category with ourselves. We are less likely to help people whom we think of as "them" than we are to help people whom we perceive as being among "us." While Schervish and Havens provide evidence for this "identification" theory by examining the traits and social habits of volunteers, my look at the motivations which volunteers attribute to their voluntary activities seems to provide even greater support for this notion because it goes to the actual state of mind of the volunteers.

Understanding the attitudes that drive volunteers can help us to understand what factors in society might drive more people to volunteer and what factors may cause fewer people to volunteer. In particular, what I believe my findings indicate is that fundamental to volunteering to help people in need is an attitude that the people being helped are not to be pitied or considered completely at fault for the problems they face, but instead that they are worthy of help because they are basically the same as the volunteers; or, because I identify with you as a part of a "we," I can feel gratified by helping you. In addition, my

findings indicate that people do not measure the level of need before going out to volunteer; they will not figure that they do not have to help because it is already being done, for they are driven by a desire to help and the gratifications that can be derived from helping, rather than by the need itself.

What does this say about what forces could possibly affect the level of volunteerism? First, it should seem to follow from what I have found that a greater level of public assistance to people in need will not drive people away from volunteering themselves to help people in need. What government does appears not to be a factor in the volunteers' own decisions.

However, certain attitudes about other people are prerequisites to wanting to help those people. This being the case, factors that affect how people who might volunteer think of people who need assistance may affect the level of volunteerism. As I have quoted Zaller as indicating, people form much of their view of the world and their explanations for what is going on in the world based on opinions and explanations that are communicated to us by influential people such as experts and public officials. It follows that the messages that are communicated to us by political rhetoric about welfare recipients, and by the examples set by governmental policy toward the poor, might affect our attitudes about those people. Through words and through policy, political actors have been communicating numerous myths about people on welfare in recent years: that most people on welfare are on for most of their lives, that their children tend to become dependent on welfare, that they keep having

babies to get more money, that they are ripping us off through welfare fraud, etc.⁵² These and other myths that carry the message that those who are in need have arrived at their situations because of some personal flaw, or laziness, or irresponsibility, and the continual perpetuation of these myths may persuade large numbers of people that these images are true. And if they do, then large numbers of people will define those who are in need as “them” instead of as part of “we.” Fewer people will feel a share in responsibility for helping people who are poor. They will be less likely to identify with those in need, and thus less willing to help them.

In other words, if the volunteers who participated in my study shared Olasky's perspective on the causes of poverty, attributing their circumstances primarily to individual failings in those who are suffering, they would be less, rather than more, likely to be willing to go out and get involved in the lives of these people and to help them. If they believed, as Olasky would like us to, that assistance from others is not something to which one has a right, if they believed that people who are poor should feel a strong sense of “shame” in asking for help, if they believed that the people they seek to help have fallen into their circumstances by a lack of a sense of personal responsibility, some of these volunteers, having defined people in need as “those others” who are irresponsible or weak or lazy, might not volunteer to help them. If a society in which large numbers of people engage in voluntary human services activities to help those of us who are in need is desirable, then the

52 Theresa Funicello effectively dispells these myths in *Tyranny of Kindness*, (Atlantic Monthly Press; New York, 1993), p. 57-60

attitudes toward people in need which Olasky would like us to have will prove to be self-defeating.

Direct Government Encouragement of Volunteerism

My main argument is that the words and actions of governmental actors and politicians seeking political offices, through their rhetoric and the public policies they enact, can have an impact on the level of human services volunteerism by affecting the attitudes of potential volunteers toward their prospective clientele; if people are persuaded to hold negative attitudes toward people who are poor and are thus driven not to identify with them, they will not offer their own time and energy to assist them. This will be examined further in the chapters ahead.

However, it is also worthwhile to examine another question; what is the impact of direct government efforts to encourage volunteerism? Most recently, in April 1997 in Philadelphia, President Bill Clinton's Volunteer Summit on America's Future garnered a tremendous amount of media coverage and publicity to the concept of volunteerism. On April 27th, former Presidents George Bush and Jimmy Carter, General Colin Powell, and other political leaders and celebrities, the dignitaries led thousands of volunteers in a host of "one-shot" voluntary activities, including a massive cleanup of Germantown Avenue. That evening, delegates and dignitaries gathered for a star-studded evening at the Philadelphia Convention Center, hosted by Oprah Winfrey. The next morning, attendees gathered at Independence Mall heard rousing calls to action from Clinton, former presidents Bush, Carter and Ford and former First Lady Nancy Reagan. The presidents signed a

"Summit Declaration," proclaiming, "each of us has...a duty to take responsibility not just for ourselves and our families, but for one another."⁵³ The event was followed by a series of similar local volunteer summits across the nation. It also launched Colin Powell's new organization, America's Promise, to encourage volunteerism across the nation.

Presumably, if government actions and rhetoric can influence the amount of human services volunteerism (and private giving to human services) by affecting our attitudes toward people who are poor, then governmental actors should logically also be able to affect our attitudes about volunteerism through direct encouragement of volunteerism of the sort described above. As I have argued, the desire to volunteer appears to be very personal in nature, not directed at addressing a level of need, but instead directed at self-gratification through helping others. This, however, does not mean that the desire to volunteer is not malleable--in some people, volunteering may be a latent desire and, with some prodding, they can be encouraged to manifest this desire through action. Did this effort to encourage volunteerism work?

As noted earlier in this chapter, survey data has revealed a seven-percent increase between 1995 and 1998 in the number of people who state that they have volunteered in the past year. In 1999, the organization Independent Sector announced that volunteerism was at its highest ever recorded level, with 56 percent of adults saying they had volunteered in the past year. Volunteerism in the subfield of human services appears to have grown even

53 From "The Presidents' Summit for America's Future," Points of Light Foundation web site (pointsoflight.org)

more dramatically. At the same time, the amount of time which the average volunteer contributes has dramatically dropped, to the point that, despite the rise in the number of people volunteering, the number of actual hours contributed has actually shrunk over this period. The growth in the percentage of the population volunteering represents a turnaround, as volunteerism had previously been on the decline between 1989 and 1995.

The reports of many of the agency administrators whom I interviewed provides support for the idea that volunteerism is on the rise, but are further revealing in that this increase is not across the board, but is concentrated among a particular age group and in particular types of human services volunteerism. Those that engage in mentoring and one-on-one type tutoring, those that offer "one-shot" opportunities, and those that have made an effort to attract younger and corporate-supplied volunteers, especially by making room for "volunteer day" type activities, have reaped all the benefits of the surge in people wanting to volunteer, while those that do not offer these opportunities have not experienced similar growth in their volunteer base. To what do organizations that have experienced an outpouring of volunteers in recent years attribute their success? There were three explanations that were offered by significant numbers of administrators:

Effects of Direct Government Encouragement. Numerous administrators referred to direct government encouragement of volunteerism as an important factor in causing more people to think about volunteering and to act on this thought. My interviews with agency administrators confirmed that there is a perception that direct encouragement of volunteerism by our highest-level political leaders is a significant factor in getting people to think of

volunteering as an important and worthwhile thing to do. In particular, they believe that the Volunteer Summit made a significant difference.

Representatives of a number of agencies attribute at least some of their recent growth to the increased awareness of volunteerism that came out of the summit. "The Volunteer Summit generated more interest," remarked Steven Mancini, Executive Director of the New York chapter of Mentoring USA, noting that the rate of telephone inquiries has since increased by 10 or 15 percent. "America's Promise created a surge," noted Kathryn O'Neill of Catholic Big Brothers/Big Sisters. "The 1997 Volunteer Summit had a real effect," asserted Michele Heigel, Executive Director of the Volunteer Referral Center. "The summit raised awareness about the need for volunteers," added Kathy Behrens of New York Cares. Betty Forhman of the Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services, has noticed that "the Volunteer Summit, the publicity regarding the need for volunteers, has helped," and Ralph Vogel of the Neighborhood Coalition for Shelter noted that there has been a recent "change in how people perceive volunteering." Debra Lynne of the Children's Aid society also spoke of a "surge around the America's Promise push." And Sharon Cooper of the Central Synagogue soup kitchen said that President Clinton's effort to encourage volunteerism has had an impact. "The President makes a difference," Said Ms. Cooper, who then went on to indicate that presidential leadership encouraging increased volunteerism is nothing new: "Kennedy encouraged community service, and people did it."

Corporate Volunteerism. In addition to their sense that individuals are coming out to participate in certain types of voluntary activities at least in part because of the impetus

provided by the Volunteer Summit, many of the administrators also attributed rising numbers of volunteers in part by an increasing tendency for corporations to encourage their employees to volunteer, either on their own or in “volunteer days” organized by the corporations in coordination with non-profit organizations.

Corporate volunteerism is nothing new; many companies have a long history of participation in voluntary activities in their communities, but this phenomenon began to grow significantly during the 1970s. As Thomas Byrne Edsall has pointed out, during the early 1970s, the corporate community began to undertake a concerted effort to improve both its lobbying position in Washington and its image with the public. At the time, the corporate community was concerned about an onslaught of regulatory policies being passed by Congress, which had created a host of new regulatory agencies, including the Environmental Protection Agency, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, the Consumer Product Safety Commission, and the Mine Safety and Health Administration. But the business community was also concerned about a disintegration of public trust in corporations that was leading to the public support that was making such legislation possible. “Public confidence in the chief executives of major corporations fell like a stone from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s. The percentage of the public describing themselves as having a great deal of confidence in corporate leaders dropped from 51 percent in the 1966-67 period to an average of 20 percent in the 1974-76 period. The rate of decline in confidence was sharper than of any other major institution in the United States, public or private, including the executive branch, the press, organized labor, and

educators....”⁵⁴

Edsall describes the corporate community’s efforts not only to develop new campaign funding strategies and more organized lobbying tactics, as well as the funding of a host of new and revitalized conservative think tanks to promote pro-business ideology; he also indicates that there was an effort by corporations to develop more public support by creating corporate advertising campaigns to improve their public image.

An aspect of this corporate image-building effort which Edsall did not address is a major increase in corporate volunteerism and philanthropy beginning in the mid-1970s. While statistics are not available to show the rise in corporate volunteerism beginning in the mid-1970s, statistics on corporate giving from Giving USA, an annual report on private philanthropy produced by the American Association of Fund Raising Council, are revealing. After years of flat growth in corporate giving throughout the 1960s, a time when individual giving to charity was skyrocketing, corporate charitable giving began to shoot upward in the mid-1970s, a time when recessionary trends were dampening other sources of private giving. While corporate giving accounted for only 3.57 percent of all private giving in 1971, down from 4.94 percent in 1966, this percentage began to grow again throughout the 1970s. By 1980, 4.47 percent of all private giving came from corporations, a figure which reached 6.59 percent by 1985. During this period, corporate volunteer programs also emerged “as a fitting response to the convergence of powerful demands on the corporation, society, and the

54 Thomas Byrne Edsall, *The New Politics of Inequality*, (Norton, New York, 1984), p. 113.

individual American worker.”⁵⁵

Corporations have found numerous benefits to encouraging employees to volunteer and to participating in community voluntary efforts. Corporations have increasingly realized that “the majority of Americans pay some attention to a company’s involvement in the community” when forming an opinion of the company,⁵⁶ and that “certain influential segments of the American public are revising their buying behaviors to align with beliefs that social responsibility is part of doing business.”⁵⁷ Not only do companies increasingly understand the importance of the public relations benefits of doing community service, but they have also realized that volunteering can lead to a more loyal, more fulfilled, and higher quality workforce. Among the skills employees enhance through volunteer participation are “communication skills,” “organizational and time management skills,” “people skills--caring, listening negotiation”; “accountability and assessment reporting”; “planning skills”, “budgeting and allocation skills”, and “survival skills such as stress management.” In addition, volunteering “fosters changed attitudes about work and society” which help to “shape the workplace and its outcomes,” including: “increased understanding of coworkers and respect for diversity, more innovative approaches in responding to difficulties, enhancement of calculated risk taking, heightened appreciation for benefits provided by employers, enlarged sense of community and social obligation, greater appreciation for

55 The Conference Board, *Corporate Volunteer Programs: Benefits to Business*, (Conference Board; New York, 1993), p. 7.

56 Conference Board, p. 15.

57 Conference Board, p. 7.

contributions from all levels of the organization, affirmation of personal capability and worth, development of habits of pride and responsibility, and positive resistance to feelings of isolation and alienation.”⁵⁸

While corporate volunteerism has been on the rise for a long time now, it appears to have surged particularly since the Volunteer Summit, which specifically called on corporations to increase their level of involvement in their communities. Many of the agency administrators I interviewed who have experienced sharp recent growth in their numbers of volunteers attribute this growth at least in part to a recent upsurge in corporate volunteerism; in particular, they are increasingly being contacted by corporations seeking opportunities for volunteer days. “Increasing numbers of corporations want to be involved,” reported Harriet Patterson of the Association to Benefit Children. At New York Cares, which has been growing at a phenomenal pace in recent years, “corporations doing more accounts for a major share of the increase, with people doing things either with the company or being encouraged by the company,” according to Executive Director Kathy Behrens. Jane Gropp of Women In Need says that more corporations are getting involved because “it’s good public relations.” “More corporations are having a volunteer week or a volunteer day,” said Brady Crane of Grand Central Neighborhood Services.

Many non-profits that are being contacted by corporations cannot use them because their set-up or the type of work they do is not suitable for one-day group activities; “There’s a lot of competition for the corporate partnerships [among corporations seeking opportunities

58 Conference Board, p. 20.

for volunteer teams]. But we need a multi-time commitment, which doesn't match with the 'volunteer day' thing," commented Kiran Gaugioso from Sponsors for Educational Opportunity. Other organizations that do use single-day volunteers, like soup kitchens, are overbooked, and therefore cannot accommodate the onslaught of requests they are receiving from corporations. It appears that, aside from organizations that specialize in finding single-day activities for groups of volunteers, like New York Cares, the demand by corporations for volunteer opportunities for teams of employees is exceeding the supply of such opportunities.

Better Organization By the Non-Profit Community to Mobilize Volunteers. Quite a few volunteer program administrators attributed the increased number of volunteers in their own organizations, and in general, to the intensification of their own efforts and the efforts of the non-profit community in general to recruit volunteers in recent years. "The greater numbers of volunteers is more due to our own generated activity than to any unsolicited outpouring," said Mr. Mancini of Mentoring USA. "The number of volunteers has been increasing, but because of our continued interest" rather than any external or societal trend, according to Ms. Gaugioso of Sponsors for Educational Opportunity. According to Mr. Griedman of the Goddard Riverside Settlement House, more volunteers have been attracted because "we've gotten better at recruiting them." "We've raised our profile," said Kathy Behrens of New York Cares, who adds that the organization's use of the Internet is one factor behind the explosion of volunteers at her organization. Similarly, Betty Forhman, Director of Volunteer Services at the Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services, notes

that “attracting volunteers is becoming easier because of the Internet. We’ve gotten lots of recent response that way.” Not only do many administrators attribute their volunteer growth to their own (or their organization’s own) increased efforts, they often add that the change in the population of volunteers to a younger voluntary work force is in part the result of their own conscious efforts to recruit younger volunteers. For example, said Ms. Slobodin of the United Jewish Appeal Federation, “We’ve been focusing on reaching out to baby boomers and generation X’ers in order to give them a positive association with the Jewish community.”

Some administrators also pointed to a greater level of organization and sophistication in volunteer recruitment and coordination throughout the non-profit community. Indeed, the voluntary sector in New York City has become more organized over the past decade, with the vast growth of organizations such as the Non-Profit Coordinating Council, the Volunteer Referral Center, the Literacy Hotline, and other organizations that provide services to the non-profit community and that serve as clearinghouses of volunteer opportunities.

In addition, according to Carole Friedland, who has served as director of volunteer services for the Mayor’s Voluntary Action Center for the past 13 years, individual non-profits are “starting to get more sophisticated in the kinds of activities and how they manage the volunteers. The competition for volunteers is very high. There is an increased awareness of the usefulness of volunteers.” Ms. Friedland notes that the job of volunteer manager is increasingly becoming a high-level management job in many non-profits. “They’re willing to pay top dollar to coordinators of volunteers.” In addition, organizations are becoming more aware of the changing demographics of the voluntary work force, and are designing volunteer

opportunities to accommodate the time constraints of working people, with evening and weekend assignments. Interestingly, several of the organizations where I conducted interviews had very recently established the position of volunteer coordinator or a department dedicated to volunteer recruitment and coordination. The Children's Aid Society, which has been around for over a century, only centralized its volunteer operation by creating a volunteer division in 1996. At Catholic Big Brothers/Big Sisters, another century-old organization, Ms. O'Neill's predecessor was the first-ever coordinator of volunteers. At Operation Frontline, which provides home economics and nutrition seminars and other programs for people on welfare, the volunteer program was moribund before Marcella Friel was hired to coordinate the volunteer program in 1997.

It would seem that the development within organizations and in the larger non-profit community of more sophisticated and centralized structures for recruiting volunteers and coordinating their activities may be a response to a significant increase in the need for these structures, caused by a growing demand for volunteer opportunities and a larger numbers of volunteers to coordinate. While volunteer recruitment may be becoming increasingly sophisticated and well-organized, this organization is mainly occurring in agencies that focus primarily on attracting relatively youthful volunteer forces, largely engaged in either mentoring and other services to children and teenagers and one-shot opportunities that fit into the schedules of busy working people. It appears to be a response to an increased demand for volunteer opportunities that has been concentrated in a small number of types of activities. Those organizations that are not appealing to the desire for mentoring jobs and not providing weekend and evening opportunities are not experiencing growth. So it appears that growth

in human services volunteerism has been uneven, not distributed across the entire spectrum of types of organizations.

Apparent Impact of the Volunteer Summit. Despite detractors who believe that the Volunteer Summit's impact on encouraging people to volunteer and on encouraging corporations to provide opportunities for their employees to volunteer was extremely limited, there is evidence that the summit did have a significant effect. Volunteerism has been growing rapidly in many of the organizations where I conducted interviews, and in some of these organizations, the administrators date the beginning of the growth period to the time of the Summit. Furthermore, where the growth has occurred is interesting--it has occurred especially in mentoring and one-on-one tutoring programs, as well as in one-shot volunteering, often organized through corporations. These are precisely the areas focused upon by the Summit and by the organization it launched, America's Promise. Many of the administrators perceive that the Summit and America's Promise has had a significant influence. They also attribute some of their growth to a surge in corporate volunteerism, which was also strongly encouraged by the summit and by America's Promise. Interestingly, as we will learn in Chapter 4, although volunteers did not mention government encouragement of volunteerism as a reason for their decision to volunteer, when asked specifically whether government encouragement called their attention to the need to volunteer, 32 percent of the volunteers said that it did.

Also interesting is that the volunteer administrators in some organizations that are not engaged in the types of volunteerism encouraged by the Summit, and which do not

particularly go after the sort of youthful groups to which it was intended to appeal, have a very different opinion of the Summit from those that are in the vortex of the specific types of activities that the event and America's Promise have encouraged. "The 1997 Summit raised the profile of volunteerism; it created a lot of hoopla," said Alina Molina of the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program, which specifically recruits people who are at least 55 years of age. "But it was so heavily youth focused, in a perverse way," focusing on "what young people could do to help kids." And, according to Ms. Friedland from the Mayor's Voluntary Action Center, while America's Promise had the effect of "a flurry of phone calls" from people inquiring about mentoring, it did nothing to increase the number of opportunities to serve as a mentor. "[America's Promise] is siphoning off a great deal of money. Corporations are giving money to them, but they don't do programs. It's high overhead, a lot of public relations. They give the impression they're actually supporting mentoring programs but they're not. People think they're going to help kids, but they don't. There may be more people who want to be mentors, but the organizations don't have the money" to expand their mentoring programs to accommodate greater demand for their services. "The people who would actually have to run the programs weren't there." Added Carole Kellerman of Learning Leaders, "America's Promise, all that stuff, is not having an affect. There is not a sudden sense out there that it's good to volunteer."

While not conclusive, these findings indicate a strong possibility that direct encouragement of volunteerism by government can have an affect on individual decision making--the Volunteer Summit directed attention at a specific set of categories of volunteerism, and it appears that most of the growth of volunteerism since then occurred in

the very categories that the Summit addressed. Leadership by respected political figures appears to have influenced people to do a specific set of good deeds.

Conclusion. There is a popular perception that there is an inverse relationship between government activism and volunteerism to assist people in need. If government does too much, people will come to take it for granted that government will take care of the problems, or will perceive that so much is being done already that there is no need for them to act on their own to help. On the other hand, if government is less involved, there will be an outpouring of volunteers to fill the void, people who today might be engaged in volunteerism were it not for the over-involvement by government, which stifles their initiative. More government means less volunteerism, and less government means more volunteerism.

If there had been a systematic keeping of statistics on volunteerism over a long period of time, we might be able to test this perception by learning whether volunteerism grew at different rates in periods when there were different government approaches to poverty and related problems. But data on levels of volunteerism in America is only available going back to 1987, and this data is based on survey research rather than on an actual accounting of numbers of volunteers.

How can we learn, then, whether and how levels of volunteerism to help people in need might be influenced by trends in public policy toward these people? One way is to learn from volunteers themselves, and from the non-profit agency administrators who work closely with volunteers, about the motivations that lead people to become human services

volunteers. If we know what makes volunteers tick, then we might get an idea of what types of public policies and other external factors have the potential to turn people on or off to volunteering. This is what I have tried to do through my survey of human service volunteers and interviews with agency volunteer coordinators in New York City.

The most definitive finding from the survey and interviews is that the decision to be a volunteer is essentially a very personal decision. Most volunteers, when asked open-endedly about why they decided to volunteer, point to philosophical beliefs, a desire for some sort of self-fulfillment, a desire to participate in their communities, or simply the desire to help others. Most do not appear to be driven by particular issues or problems that concern them, or by the level of need that exists, or by the conditions that the people they serve are in. Only a handful refer to a lack of action or involvement on the part of society, government, or other people in general.

The desire to help others for such personal reasons would not appear to be susceptible to increases in government services to help people in need. Simply put, volunteers are responding to a higher authority within themselves.

However, looking at the volunteers' self-described motivations more closely, they seem to confirm that volunteerism is a reflection of what Schervish and Havens have called "communities of participation," or the scope of one's sense of social connectedness. When one has a large sense of social connectedness, one is likely to have a high degree of "empathetic identification" with the needs of others, and is likely to identify with the needs and aspirations of others. An individual will feel empathy with those he or she feels

connected to and categorizes as a member of one's own group. When we identify with people, we are willing to help them, because we identify our own well-being with their well-being. This is why so many of the volunteers were quick to attribute their decision to volunteer to a desire to help others and to add a statement about the self-fulfilling qualities inherent in helping others--people who volunteer are often people who are able to fulfill themselves by helping others because they define those others as being very much like themselves--they identify them as a "we" rather than as a "them," and are thus able to feel true empathy for those others. People help people whom they identify as sharing some commonality with them, with those whom they feel a sense of "we-ness."

If a sense of identification or "we-ness" with others is behind volunteerism to help others, then it logically follows that the amount of volunteerism in our society will be dampened if this sense of identification and connectedness with people who are in need is weakened. Following Zaller's argument that we take certain cues from the actions and rhetoric of political leaders, it would appear that volunteerism may decrease when governmental action and political rhetoric communicate to the rest of society a sense that society is not responsible for the conditions of those who are poor, and that the poor are largely responsible for their own conditions because of personal failings--irresponsibility, dependence, laziness, etc. The communication of such an image of people who are poor may drive a wedge between the better-off and the worse-off and cause increasing numbers of people not to identify with those who are poor, to think of them as fundamentally "different" from themselves. Some people who might otherwise be potential volunteers in

human services may not think to volunteer, because they will cease to have an “empathetic identification” with people who are poor; they will think of the poor as a “them” instead of part of an “us,” and will thus not be likely to volunteer to help people who are poor.

On the other hand, a government and politicians may set an example—through action and rhetoric—that the problems that cause poverty are social problems and not entirely the fault and the responsibility of the individuals who suffer, who make us feel that the conditions of those who are poor are important, and who communicate a sense that society bears some responsibility for the conditions of all its people. Such action and rhetoric will help to generate, in increasing numbers of people, a sense of identification and “we-ness” with those who suffer in poverty, and will thus encourage us to take our own initiative to help as well. If this is the case, then the relationship between government activism and private, voluntary activism is positive, rather than inverse.

Furthermore, there is some evidence that, at least, volunteerism is malleable to direct encouragement by political leaders. Although the evidence is far from conclusive, there is reason to believe that the President's Summit on America's Future, the highly publicized event which encouraged people to get involved in a variety of types of voluntary activities in their communities, was a significant factor in the increase in the number of people desiring to volunteer which was reported by many of the non-profit administrators whom I interviewed. In addition, the particular types of volunteer activities for which people are coming out appear to be the very types of activities that were specifically promoted by the Summit. This may serve as an indication that leadership by direct encouragement can

inspire people to do good deeds; if this is true, then it is also suggestive that people may also be inspired by leaders speaking through action; it is possible that when government sets an example of caring through its public policies, people will follow by reaching out on their own to help people as well.

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CHAPTER FOUR: VOLUNTEERISM, A SUBSTITUTE FOR OR AN ADJUNCT TO GOVERNMENT ACTION?

When asked why they decided to become volunteers, most volunteers provide answers that indicate wholly personal considerations—a desire to help people because they derive good feelings, or personal fulfillment, or a sense of community from doing so. They do not discuss the level of need that exists, or what government or society is or is not doing to help those who are in need. From this we might simply conclude that people who volunteer are just people who volunteer, and they would do so regardless of the level of need or whether government is doing anything to help people.

But it might be worthwhile to probe a bit more deeply into the respondents' motivations, and to ask them another set of questions to learn whether, when prompted to consider it, they think there is some relationship between what government does and what they do.

In my survey, I did just that, with some revealing results, which are presented in this chapter.

Prompting the Respondents. Let us look further at the motivations of volunteers. After being asked the open-ended question about their motivations for volunteering, the respondents were given a set of possible motivations to rate on a scale of 1 to 5, on which

"1" signified "not at all"; "2" represented "a little," "3" "somewhat," "4" "a good deal," and "5" "very much." Their responses when prompted were somewhat different from their open-ended answers, and are worth reporting:

Figure 4.1. Respondents' motivations for volunteering from a list of possible answers.

	Very Much	A Good Deal	Somewhat	A Little	Not at all
"I want to help people one at a time"	39.4%	29%	19.9%	3.8%	7.9%
"Government isn't doing enough about certain issues"	22.9	19.7	21.3	12.4	23.8
"I'd like to make the city a better place"	36.8	27.2	17.6	7.4	10.8
"I want to feel a sense of personal fulfillment or accomplishment"	52.5	27.0	12.4	2.8	5.3
"It may lead to a job"	6.6	4.1	10.1	9.7	69.5
"It gives me a chance to make friends"	11.8	13.7	23.6	20.5	30.4
"I want to stay active"	38.7	23.5	20.1	6.2	11.5
"I may meet people who can help me in my career"	17.1	8.4	15.2	9.6	49.7
"Government is already trying to address the issue, and I wanted to pitch in"	7.9	10.1	23.0	17.4	41.6
"Volunteerism is a value I learned from my family"	24.8	17.7	18.1	16.5	22.8
"I want to help people with whom I share a common characteristic or background"	11.5	11.8	12.5	14.0	50.2
"I want to learn/sharpen some skills"	10.4	15.4	17.6	17.3	39.3
"I was encouraged to get involved by actions being taken by government"	4.1	3.4	10.0	15.3	67.2
"I was encouraged by my religious institution to get involved"	5.6	6.9	8.7	8.1	70.7
"I was encouraged by peers or friends"	5.9	5.5	15.5	9.2	63.8

When the respondents were given this set of motivations to rank, their responses

were quite different from their answers to the open-ended question about motivations. Looking at the first column, "very much," the top five motivations are personal fulfillment first, helping individuals second, making the city a better place third, staying active fourth, and volunteering as a family value fifth.

While too little effort by government to address the issue they were working on finished only sixth on this list in the "very much" column, this becomes the fourth most frequent motivation if we take into account the first three columns--64 percent of the respondents said they were motivated at least "somewhat" by a lack of government involvement. This differs greatly from the respondents' answers to the open-ended question discussed previously, on which hardly any respondents thought of this as an answer. One might surmise that, while a significant number of people who volunteer believe that government is not doing enough for the people they personally are trying to assist through their own efforts, it is not one of their main motivations, or at least not the driving force behind their decision to volunteer and choice of voluntary activity. Put a different way, inadequate government attention to the problems facing the clientele with whom the volunteers work is not a central factor in their motivation to volunteer, but it is a significant background factor.

Relatively few respondents thought they were volunteering to "pitch in" on an effort already being undertaken by government, or that they were "encouraged by actions being taken by government," but a significant number of respondents still cited these as motivations when we take into account the 41 percent who responded that they were at least

“somewhat” motivated by this. Once again, while the actions of government may not be a primary motivating force which the volunteers' think of on their own, they acknowledge that what government does may have had an effect on their own decisions when they are asked to consider the possibility. While government action is not a direct reason for the choice to volunteer, it may create part of the background context in which people decide that volunteering would be a good thing to do.

Does Government Action Call Volunteers' Attention to the Problems On Which they Wish to Help?

So far, we have established that, when human services volunteers are asked an open-ended question about their motivations for volunteering, their reasons are extremely personal in nature; they almost never refer to something government is doing or failing to do that influenced their decision to volunteer. However, when given a list of possible reasons for volunteering, a significant number of respondents do agree that government action or neglect has had some influence on their personal decisions. 63.9 percent agree that they were at least “somewhat” influenced to volunteer by their opinion that “government isn't doing enough about certain issues. 41 percent agreed they were at least “somewhat” influenced by their view that “government is already trying to address the issue, and I wanted to pitch in.”

In addition to giving the respondents a list of possible motivations for volunteering, the survey also asked them explicitly to evaluate whether their attention to the issues they

work on was drawn by one of four choices related to the performance of government. To the question, What has the government done to call attention to the issues you would like to help address through your volunteer efforts (check as many as apply)?, the respondents answered as follows:

1. Created a government program to address the issue:	21.1%
2. Encouraged volunteerism to address the issue:	32.0
3. Failed to adequately address the issue:	41.1
4. Cut back programs to address the issue:	31.7
No answer	13.6

When prompted with this question, it appears that government inaction on and cutbacks of programs to address issues that concerned the respondents (answers 3 and 4) had a greater positive impact in calling the respondents' attention to the problems they decided to help out on than did government action to address the issue (answer 1), but the latter did have a positive affect. That a third of the respondents had their attention drawn to the need to volunteer by government encouragement of volunteerism may be a sign of success for the Volunteer Summit and for President Clinton's and General Powell's calls for volunteerism.

It should also be noted that there was a significant positive correlation of .523 between answers 1 and 3 to the above question--about half of those who checked one of these seemingly contradictory answers also checked the other. Either a large number of respondents misunderstood the question, or it is possible to have one's attention called to an

issue by both government attention and by government inattention to it at the same time. This may not be a contradictory assumption. It is possible that once an issue is important enough to garner attention and action from the government, that issue enters the vortex of things we think of as at least in part government responsibilities (or at least things that government does or can do). Once large numbers of people think of an issue in such a way, it is possible that whatever government does about it--either by increasing or decreasing its efforts on that issue or changing the way it addresses the issue--brings attention to that issue. It is also quite reasonable for a respondent to be attracted to an issue by publicity from government involvement on the issue, and then--having learned about the issue-- to be further interested by a sense that government is not doing enough.

Regardless of whether these things are true, it is true that over 86 percent of the respondents were willing to state that some aspect of government's approach to the problem they wanted to address had played a role in calling their attention to the problem.

Volunteers were also asked to provide an assessment of the performance of government which was independent of whether the performance of government influenced their decision to volunteer. This was an open-ended question: What is your opinion of the response of government agencies to the issues you are trying to address as a volunteer?

Their responses fell into six basic categories:

Government is not doing enough:	39.9%
No answer:	27.2%
Don't know:	13.9%

Adequate or good:	9.9%
Government does a bad job:	7.7%
Government shouldn't be involved:	1.2%

Over 40 percent of the respondents stated they do not know or did not answer this question. Of the remainder who did express an opinion, the vast majority expressed a belief that government is paying too little attention or is providing too little in the way of resources to address the problem or issue the volunteer was working on. Only a very small number of volunteers saw government involvement in the area in which they volunteer as a negative; a handful thought that government should not play a role.

Scrutinizing the respondents' answers to the four sets of questions outlined above, this sample of human services volunteers can be seen to exhibit several layers of thinking and sentiment about the actions of government. When given an open-ended question about why they volunteer, the fact that government is or is not doing enough to help the people with whom the volunteers are working or to address the problems they are trying to help ameliorate does not seem to enter into their decisions at all—with few exceptions, their most salient reasons for volunteering are very personal in nature. This may make the volunteers appear to be unconcerned or unaware of what government is doing, or may lead us to believe that their decisions are unaffected by government. But when asked a question that makes them consider whether government action or inaction may have been among the factors that caused them to become involved, more of the respondents realize that, in fact, what government does may have some impact—perhaps a subtle, background impact—on their own decision to volunteer. When asked directly if their attention to this issue was drawn in

part by their feelings about whether government is adequately addressing the issue or problem, most find that government action or inaction did have some effect on their own paying attention to a problem or issue on which they decided to volunteer.

These volunteers become most opinionated when asked their opinions about the performance of government in the issue areas in which they are personally involved, without being asked whether this opinion affected their interest in volunteering. The vast majority of respondents who have an opinion appear to believe government is not doing enough, and also seem to believe that government should do more. It appears they would enthusiastically welcome more government attention to the problems they themselves are working on. (It also would seem significant that, combined, the respondents who stated “no answer” or “don't know”, 41.1 percent, outnumbered each of the other responses. One might surmise from this that people who volunteer often do so in the absence of knowledge about how certain problems on which they are volunteering are being addressed by government.)

Do Volunteers See their Efforts as A Substitute for Government Action? If, when asked, large numbers of human services volunteers express a belief that government is not doing enough to address the problems that they work on, it might logically follow that large numbers of them would leave their voluntary activities if government did more. If this were true, this would seem to support a “crowding out” theory about the relationship between government action and voluntary action. Volunteers, it could be said, come out, at least in part, because they see that government is not addressing certain issues or problems, and if

government steps up its action on these problems, individuals will come to depend on government to do the work and will consequently withdraw their own efforts. A substitution effect exists, and we can count on more people volunteering if government pulls back, replacing government programs by providing a more caring, more personal, and qualitatively superior form of assistance.

On the other hand, one can point out that these respondents are volunteering to help others even though they seem to believe in government doing more, indicating that there is no contradiction--that it is in fact consistent--to want government programs to address the problems of people who are poor and at the same time to want to volunteer on one's own to help. In addition, one might take into consideration the more than 40 percent who expressed no opinion or said they had no knowledge of how the government is or is not addressing the problems facing their clientele, and that since these people are unaware of what government is doing, their willingness to volunteer would not be affected by what government does.

In one view, it would be argued that volunteers see themselves as substituting for government. In the other, it would be argued that volunteers see themselves more as an adjunct to government action. Which is true? We might gain some insight into this by asking our sample of volunteers a set of hypothetical questions: If government did more to address the problem or issue you are concerned with, do you think your voluntary efforts would be less necessary? Do you think you would be less likely to volunteer if government were doing more? What is the role of volunteerism vis a vis government in assisting people in need?

Asking the Volunteers. Figure 4.2 contains a series of statements on which the respondents were asked whether they “strongly agree,” “agree,” “disagree,” or “strongly disagree.” Two of the statements are hypothetical—“If government were more involved in the issues I work on, my voluntary involvement would be less needed”, and “I would be less likely to volunteer if government were doing more to address the issues I am concerned about.” The first question was an attempt to learn the extent to which volunteers see their own efforts as a substitute for government action, and the second was designed to find out whether they would follow up on this belief by withdrawing their own efforts if government did more. The other items in figure 4.2 were designed to gain a sense of how the volunteers define the problems their clientele face—as an individual or a social problem—and whom they think is or should be held responsible for addressing these problems—government, voluntary associations, the individuals themselves, or some combination. These questions are significant in attempting to confirm the idea that defining problems as “social” in nature is a central part of the set of attitudes that leads a person to volunteer, and to learning whether people volunteer despite a belief in government activism.

Figure 4–2. Respondent's views of the nature of the problems they work on, and on the role of volunteers in relation to the role of government and individual action.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Answer
"I would be less likely to volunteer if government were doing more to address the issues I am concerned about." (LESSMORE)	2.1%	10%	34.1%	34.1%	19.6%
"I would be less likely to volunteer if government were doing less to address the issues I am concerned about" "LESSLESS"	.6	2.7	27.5	46.2	23
"The issues I try to address as a volunteer are social problems, which should be addressed primarily by government." (GOVPRIME)	9.4	23	27.2	12.7	27.8
"The issues I try to address as a volunteer are individual problems, which should be addressed by personal improvements on the part of those who are suffering." (INDSELF)	4.8	27.2	27.8	18.1	22.1
"The issues I work on are social problems, which people should get together to solve." (SOCTOG)	24.5	47.7	5.4	5.1	17.2
"The issues I work on would be better addressed by government than through volunteerism". (GOVVOL)	6.6	13	36.6	16.6	27.2
"If government were more involved in the issues I work on, my voluntary involvement would be less needed." (LESSNEED)	5.1	21.5	34.1	19.9	19.3

Regarding volunteers' perceptions about how what they do relates to what government does, and the sort of attitudes that volunteers hold about the causes and appropriate solutions to the problems they work on, there are some interesting results:

- Only 12.1 percent of the respondents (and 15 percent of those who offered an answer) agreed or strongly agreed that they would be less likely to volunteer to help people in need if government did more, as opposed to 68.2 percent who disagreed

or strongly disagreed with this statement. (The remainder said “no answer.”) This finding goes against the idea that government makes people who might otherwise volunteer tend to look to government to solve problems alone and thus dampens voluntary initiative.

- 26.6 percent (and 33 percent excluding those who gave no answer) agreed or strongly agreed that their voluntary efforts would be less needed if government did more, while 64 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. About half of those who agreed that their efforts would be less necessary nevertheless said they would not be less likely to volunteer if the government did more. While they believe their efforts might become less necessary, these individuals either believe their efforts would still be necessary enough to merit their attention, or they believe they would do what they do regardless of their perception of how necessary it was.
- 72.2 percent (and 87.3 percent of those who gave an answer) agreed or strongly agreed that the problems their clientele face are social in nature, while only 9.5 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. This seems to corroborate the concept that people who volunteer to help people in need tend to see the problems those people face as at least partially the responsibility of society and therefore are interested in volunteering to help out of a shared sense of responsibility.
- Asked whether these problems are individual in nature, 32 percent (and 41.1 percent of those who gave an answer) agreed, as opposed to 45.9 percent who disagreed. But many of the people who agreed with this statement also agreed with the

statement that the problems are social in nature. It is no contradiction to agree with both; one can believe a problem is in part the responsibility of society and in part the responsibility of the individual who is suffering. In fact, 98 percent of those who thought of the problems as individual in nature also agreed that the problems were social in nature, while only 47 percent of those who agreed that the problems were social in nature also agreed that they are individual in nature. Thus, *only two percent of the entire sample (excluding those who gave no answer) thought the problems were solely individual in nature.* This finding adds credence to the proposition that defining problems as social rather than individual in nature is a central precursor to the decision to volunteer.

Relationship Between Views of Government Performance and Views of the Role of Government and Volunteerism in Addressing Problems of People in Need. Individuals' assessments of the performance of government in addressing the problems they are working on are somewhat predictive of their views of the role of government, the nature of their clientele's problems, and the relationship between their own voluntary efforts and the actions of government. Respondents who stated that their attention to the problem on which they are trying to help out was drawn by a failure of government to adequately deal with the problem, or cutbacks of government programs to deal with the problem, were significantly more likely than others to agree or strongly agree that government should have primary responsibility for addressing the problem. They also were more likely to agree that government involvement would be superior to voluntary action to address the problem. And

they were more likely to believe that their own voluntary efforts would be less needed if government did more about the problem. Those who attributed neither government failure to address a problem nor government cutbacks were far less likely to believe that more government attention or involvement to the issue would affect how necessary their own efforts are. They were far less likely to believe that government should play the primary role in addressing the problem, and also less likely to believe that government would do a better job than volunteers.

On the hypothetical question of whether they think they would be less likely to volunteer if government did more, those who identified government failure to address the problem or government cutbacks were more likely to agree with the statement than were those who did not.

Thus, even though people do not attribute their reasons for volunteering to perceptions of what government does, they do see a connection between what they do and what government does when they are pressed on the issue. Many of them will agree that the failure of government to address a problem or issue had an impact on their decision to volunteer. They also were more likely to see government as playing a major role on the problems they are involved in, and many agreed that their own efforts would be less needed if government would play what they see as its appropriate role. Most of these people still thought that they would not reduce their own voluntary effort if government did more, but more of them indicated they would than did those who did not admit that they were affected in their motivation to volunteer by a dearth of government action.

Figure 4-3. Respondents' answers from figure 4.2, in relation to how government actions affected their decision to volunteer.

VARIABLE	Lessmore (pct agree)	Lessless (pct agree)	Govprime (pct agree)	Indself (pct agree)	Soctog (pct agree)	Govvol (pct agree)	Lessneed (pct agree)
Entire Sample (pct. of those who answered)	15	4.3	44.8	41.1	87.3	27	33
Att. drawn by existence of government program	11.6	1.6	47.3	41.7	88.7	32.1	30.5
Att. drawn by government encouragement of volunteerism	16.5	2.3	44.7	34.1	82.3	19.3	31.2
Att. drawn by government failure to address issue	21	5.1	55.8	40.9	84.4	39	49.2
Att. drawn by government cutbacks	20.4	5.6	59.5	35.2	83	43.5	46.8
Attention not drawn by government cutbacks or failure to address issue	11.2	1.1	31.8	42.4	90.3	13.3	19.8
Government not doing enough	20.3	5.4	57.6	37	87	33.7	46.1

(The figures in each column represent the percentage of the sample, excluding those who said "no answer," who selected either "strongly agree" or agree" on the statements listed in the first column.)

Demographic Variables and Individuals' Perceptions of the Relationship Between Government Action and Voluntary Initiative. On demographic variables, including gender, age, race, religion, education level, and household income, only one set of variables was a significant predictor of one's answers to any of the questions on the chart in Figure 4.1: age and retired status. In terms of age, older people were far more likely than the rest of the sample to believe in government involvement on the types of problems they were involved in as volunteers. They were far less likely to see the problems people face as primarily

individual problems. They were far more likely to believe that their own efforts would be less necessary if government did more, and somewhat more disposed to believe they would be less likely to volunteer if government did more.

These last two findings are particularly surprising because we think of retired people as volunteering out of a need to be active and to do something constructive, and these motivations should be unaffected by perceptions of whether government is adequately involved in helping those in need. In fact, most of the people who attributed their volunteerism in part to a need to stay active were retired people.

However, these last two findings will become a bit less surprising shortly, when we begin to consider the effects that the level of voluntary experience that volunteers possess has on volunteers' attitudes, and the relationship of age to voluntary experience.

Figure 4--4. Responses to figure 4.2, by age.

VARIABLE	Lessmore (pct agree)	Lessless (pct agree)	Govprime (pct agree)	Indself (pct agree)	Soctog (pct agree)	Govvol (pct agree)	Lessneed (pct agree)
Entire Sample (pct. of those who answered)	15	4.3	44.8	41.1	87.3	27	33
Age 18-30	9.2	5.1	45.6	45.5	94.3	23.1	27.4
Age 31-50	17.2	3.4	41	52.4	92.7	13.6	29.9
Age 50-64	20.4	9.3	41.4	38.2	88.4	41.2	40
Age 65 and over	21.7	0	50.9	21.1	63.7	42.2	43.9

Political Identification and Individuals' Perceptions of the Relationship Between Government Action and Voluntary Initiative. People's political views appear to have an

expected effect on their perceptions of the role of government in assisting people in need. Respondents were asked to identify their political party, and to rate themselves on a political scale in which "1" signified conservative, "2" equaled moderate, and "3" represented liberal. This variable bears a positive relationship with the belief that government should play a primary role in solving the problems on which the volunteers were working (a .225 correlation, with a statistical significance of .003),⁵⁹ meaning that being more liberal meant more greatly favoring government involvement. The variable also correlated positively with the belief that the individual would be less likely to volunteer if government did more (.157 correlation, sig. .032). Democrats were more likely than the overall sample to disagree with the statement that the problems they are working to help solve are individual problems (-.187 correlation, sig. .009), and were also more likely to state that their efforts would be less needed if government did more (.191 correlation, sig. .007). Republicans were less likely than the overall sample to believe government has the main responsibility for helping the people they are serving as volunteers (-.167 correlation, sig. .024), while Democrats were more likely than the overall sample to believe this (.272 correlation, sig. .000).

While there was no statistically significant correlation between political party or political orientation and LESSMORE, Democrats were more likely than Republicans and independents to agree with the statement that they would be less likely to volunteer if government did more.

59 All correlations in this study were conducted on SPSS. A statistical significance of .05 or lower is usually the standard for a valid result.

Figure 4-5. Respondents' answers from figure 4.2, by political party and political perspective.

VARIABLE	Lessmore (pct agree)	Lessless (pct agree)	Govprime (pct agree)	Indself (pct agree)	Soctog (pct agree)	Govvol (pct agree)	Lessneed (pct agree)
Entire Sample (pct. of those who answered)	15	4.3	44.8	41.1	87.3	27	33
Democrat	18.4	3.3	55.9	35	83	34.5	40.8
Republican	10.3	4	17.4	44.8	93.3	29.2	29.6
Independent	6.1	6.1	38.7	43.8	97.1	11.1	25
Liberal	16.1	2.3	56.6	32.1	87.2	33.8	44.3
Moderate	13.3	3.5	39.8	42.9	88	25.6	25.8
Conservative	14.3	0	1.11	33.3	71.4	20	36.4

Effect of Voluntary Experience on Perception of the Roles of Government and Volunteerism. Respondents were asked a series of questions to ascertain whether they had volunteered previously to their current volunteer assignment, whether they were doing additional volunteer work with other organizations in addition to the organization through which they were reached for this study, how long they have been volunteers, and how many hours they estimate that they volunteer per week.

It appears that volunteers who have more experience--who have volunteered before in the past, who have been volunteers for a longer length of time, or who are current volunteers rather than prospective volunteers applying for the opportunity--tend to have somewhat different attitudes about the respective role of government and volunteerism than do those with less experience. Current volunteers are far more likely than prospective ones to view government as more effective than volunteers in solving the problems they are

interested in, and slightly more likely to believe that government should play the primary role. Current volunteers are significantly less likely to believe that the problems of their clientele are individual in nature. While they are somewhat less likely to agree that these are "social problems on which people should work together," this appears to be because of the implication in this statement of a preference for volunteerism; the current volunteers are more likely to favor government involvement. Current volunteers are also far more likely to believe their own efforts would be less needed if government did more, but this did not translate into a significant difference in the numbers who think they would actually do less if government did more.

The pattern for length of time having been a volunteer is similar in several regards--with the puzzling exception that those who have been volunteers for more than three years are less likely to agree that government should play a primary role, even though they are more likely to agree that government would do a better job than volunteerism.

These differences can be explained by comparing those whose experience has been continuous with those whose experience has been episodic. Among individuals who have volunteered more than three years but have not volunteered previously--meaning their entire volunteer experience has been in consecutive years with one organization, the trends that have been pointed out become more intense.

People who have been volunteers for a significant period of time--especially those whose volunteer career has been with one organization and who are thus presumably more deeply involved with a particular issue or clientele population--seem to have learned from

their experience certain realities about the problems they are trying to address. They have developed a sensitivity toward the complexity of the problems facing their clientele, and therefore are less likely to blame them for their own problems. They learn the limitations of voluntary efforts, and thus start to begin to sense that their own efforts are secondary to efforts made through government. They begin to see that more government involvement might lessen the need for their own voluntary efforts, although they do not come to believe that they would withdraw their own efforts if government did do more.

Figure 4.6. Respondents' answers from figure 4.2, by amount of experience as a volunteer.

VARIABLE	Lessmore (pct agree)	Lessless (pct agree)	Govprime (pct agree)	Indself (pct agree)	Soctog (pct agree)	Govvol (pct agree)	Lessneed (pct agree)
Entire Sample (pct. of those who answered)	15	4.3	44.8	41.1	87.3	27	33
Prospective	9.8	7.3	42.5	47.7	91.7	17.7	21.4
Current	20.2	2.5	46.2	36.2	84	33.8	41.3
55555 3 years or less	13.2	3.4	47.5	47.4	89.9	25	31.3
more than 3 years	17.4	5.5	41	31.7	83.5	30.1	35.5
More than 3 years, all with one organization	21	1.1	57.9	26.7	58.8	42	44

This apparently educational effect of experience in human services volunteerism can be seen in the relationship between length of time having volunteered and giving an answer of "no answer" or "don't know" when asked to evaluate the performance of government in addressing the problems the respondent works on as a volunteer. Saying "no answer" or "don't know" correlated negatively with stating one had been a volunteer for more than three years ($-.140$ correlation, sig. $.012$), and with stating that one volunteers more than three hours

a week (-.146 correlation, sig. .009). And, having no opinion or knowledge of whether government was adequately addressing the issue or problem had an effect on one's views similar to that of being a relatively inexperienced volunteer on one's views of the role of government and the nature of the problems that people in need face:

Figure 4.7. Respondents' answers to figure 4.2, by whether they express an opinion of government performance.

VARIABLE	Lessmore (pct agree)	Lessless (pct agree)	Govprime (pct agree)	Indself (pct agree)	Soctog (pct agree)	Govvol (pct agree)	Lessneed (pct agree)
Entire Sample (pct. of those who answered)	15	4.3	44.8	41.1	87.3	27	33
Respondents who have "No opinion" of or "don't know" about the performance of government	9.2	5.4	31	47	89	16	16.8
Respondents who express an opinion of government performance	19	3.8	52	32.6	87	34.2	42.4

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Effect of Voluntary Commitment on Perception of the Roles of Government and

Volunteerism. Respondents were asked to estimate how many hours a week they volunteer, and whether they volunteer in multiple organizations. Those who volunteer more than three hours also appear to believe more in government action to solve the problems they are concerned about ("govprime" and "govvol"), were less likely to believe the problems of their clientele are primarily individual problems ("indself"), and were more likely to think their own efforts would be less needed, and that they would do less themselves, if there were a greater effort by government to address the needs of their clientele. Those who volunteer in organizations in addition to the one through which they were contacted for this survey

tend to move in the opposite direction on these items. But when we look at those who volunteer more than 3 hours a week but dedicate all their time to one organization, the sense that government should do more, that government can do a better job than voluntary organizations, that they would be less needed if government did more, and that they would actually do less themselves if government did all become intensified. Presumably, then, the lessons one learns by spending a large amount of time as a volunteer in human services are diluted by dividing one's time between different organizations, different assignments, and different clientele populations, and are intensified by spending a greater deal of time in one volunteer job.

Figure 4.8. Respondents' answers from figure 4.2, by amount of time volunteered per week.

VARIABLE	Lessmore (pct agree)	Lessless (pct agree)	Govprime (pct agree)	Indself (pct agree)	Soctog (pct agree)	Govvol (pct agree)	Lessneed (pct agree)
Entire Sample (pct. of those who answered)	15	4.3	44.8	41.1	87.3	27	33
3 hours or less per week	12.4	3.7	40.8	43.4	89.4	19.5	30.7
More than 3 hours per week	19.6	5.3	51.7	37	83.2	41.5	37.5
Does not volunteer in other org.	22.4	3	45.3	49.2	81.9	34.8	38.2
Does volunteer in other org.	12.8	5.1	44	37.6	89.3	18	30.1
Volunteers more than 3 hours per week, but with only 1 org.	26.1	9.1	60.5	37.8	88	35.7	39.1

Implications of the Positive Relationship Between Voluntary Experience and the Belief In An Active Government Role in Addressing Poverty for the "Crowding Out" Effect. It appears that new volunteers, or those who have been volunteers for only a short amount of time, almost never believe that an increase in government attention to the problems which they are volunteering to help ameliorate would lessen the likelihood of their own participation as volunteers. For example, among prospective volunteers, only 7.4 percent agreed with this statement, and not one strongly agreed. Even when prompted by a statement that causes them to think about a possible relationship between what government does and what they do themselves, very few agree, and all of them qualify their agreement by not checking "strongly agree." Only when volunteers become more experienced in their assignments and with their clientele does a substantial number of volunteers begin to agree with this statement (although, when including those who gave no answer, the percentage never reaches 18 percent). The numbers rise along with an increase in the perception of government responsibility for problems and a decrease in the perception of problems as individual in nature.

If the concept that government action "crowds out" voluntary effort is correct, then it would seem logical that the people whose efforts would be most likely to be crowded out first would be new volunteers and those just considering volunteering, while--logically--those who have volunteered to serve a particular client population over an extended period of time, and who volunteer to serve a particular set of clients for a large number of hours each week, are the most committed volunteers, and thus would be least likely to be

susceptible to deciding not to volunteer because of an external factor such as increased government involvement. However, the only people in this sample who in any significant number acknowledged the possibility that they might withdraw their own efforts if government did more were the hardest-core volunteers, the ones whom it is hardest to imagine would actually quit volunteering. Some of these people state that, hypothetically, they might leave if government increased its efforts, simply because they have learned from experience that there is a nexus between their efforts and governmental efforts which might conceivably lead them to imagine that their voluntary efforts might become superfluous.

Meanwhile, those who are least committed, those who would logically be most likely to withdraw their own efforts owing to some external factor, are precisely the people who are least likely to agree that they might do less if government did more. While there are many factors that might lead them to quit (since they may be less “sold” on the idea of doing volunteer work), government doing too much is not one of these factors.

Unless an increase in government attention to problems being addressed by volunteers will cause the most committed volunteers to drop out while the newest and thus least drawn-in volunteers are unaffected--a scenario that is hard to imagine--then there is little reason to be concerned about a “crowding out” effect.

Implications of the relationships between Volunteer Traits and Views Toward the Relative Roles of Government and Volunteerism. Three quarters of respondents believe that, no matter what government does, the need for their voluntary efforts will not be diminished. Less than half of those who think their own efforts would be less needed if

government did more believe they would actually be less likely to volunteer. And, while 12.1 percent of the total sample who agree that they might be less likely to volunteer if government did more, a mere 2.1 percent of the sample strongly agreed with this statement, suggesting that more than four-fifths of the respondents who think they might withdraw their own efforts are not sure that they would. Since, when speaking for themselves, most respondents did not attribute any part of their motivation for volunteering to the level of assistance or lack of assistance provided by government to the people they are trying to help, it is reasonable to believe that the number of people who said they might be less likely to volunteer if government did more is inflated by the fact that they were prompted by this question. In other words, when presented with the statement that they would be less likely to volunteer if government did more, the respondents are prompted to think about the relationship between what government does and what they do as volunteers, something that might never have occurred to them if they were not prompted by the statement.

The response of the vast majority of respondents when presented with the hypothetical situation of government doing more goes against the expectations of those who believe that government action “crowds out” private voluntary initiative. These findings alone, however, do not provide support for the reverse argument, that people might be more likely to volunteer if government were doing more.

The vast majority of respondents, 87 percent (excluding those with “no answer”), defined the problems they are working to address as volunteers as primarily social problems that people should work on together in order to solve, while only 41 percent thought of the

problems as individual in nature and the responsibility of the individual to solve, and only two percent thought the problems were solely individual problems. This finding is very consistent with the concept that volunteers are individuals who have a sense of social connectedness that extends to the people they are trying to help—defining the problems of people in need as social rather than individual problems, or at least partially as social problems, is nearly a prerequisite for volunteering to assist those in need.

Perceptions of the respective roles of government, volunteerism, and individuals in solving problems tend to vary somewhat with different attitudinal traits in the volunteers, usually in predictable ways. Those who are more liberal politically, and those who are Democrats, are most likely to believe government should play the primary role in addressing the problems and needs of the individuals whom the volunteers are working to help. They are less likely to see the problems of their clientele as individual in nature. They are more likely than others to believe that increased government action would diminish the need for their own voluntary efforts. Although this translates into a higher rate of agreeing that one would be less likely to volunteer if government did more, still less than a fifth of Democrats agree with this statement. Those who state that their attention was called to a problem by government cutbacks or failure to address an issue or problem, who state that government is not doing enough about the problem they are concerned about, and who agree that one of their motivations for volunteering is that government is not doing enough or has cut back services, are also likely to believe that government has a primary role and that government action would diminish the need for their own volunteer work.

Age has a similar effect on these variables. This can be explained in two ways. First, on average, the older respondents did tend to have slightly more experience as volunteers than the overall sample, a trait which correlates very highly with a greater belief in government as a primary problem-solver and with a greater rate of rejection of the idea that the problems their clientele face are individual problems. Second, I would offer the possible explanation of a cohort effect at play--people who are over the age of 50 grew up in times when the idea that government should be actively involved in solving social problems was much less often challenged than it started to become beginning in the mid-1970s. Thus, it is more likely among this group to believe government should play a lead role as a problem-solver, and when presented with statements about whether greater government activism would lessen the need for their own volunteerism, and whether they might not volunteer if government were adequately taking care of problems, they accordingly agree with these statements more frequently than do other groups in the sample. Not having been exposed during their politically formative years to much of the type of rhetoric that the politicians of the 80s and 90s disseminated about the individual responsibility of people who are poor, the older volunteers are more likely than the younger ones to see problems as primarily social rather than individual. This is a possible indication of the validity of Zaller's theory that the type of rhetoric people hear from politicians has a significant on their attitudes.

Finally, the differences between less and more experienced, and less and more committed, volunteers on their perceptions of the role government should play in addressing

the problems on which they work provides reason to believe that the voluntary experience has an educational effect. The more experienced and committed the volunteer, the more likely he or she is to see the problems of their clientele as social in nature rather than as purely the fault or responsibility of the individual; the more nuanced is their understanding of the complexity of the issues their clientele face. Along with this increased understanding of the complexity of these issues comes an understanding of the limitations of voluntary efforts and of the need for more comprehensive government responses to address the problems. It follows then that, for many people, volunteering and learning first-hand about the realities of the lives of people in need may be a gateway to thinking more about the political issues behind the conditions their clientele face, and even to political involvement, in addition to direct service, to help improve these conditions.

Conclusions. The survey responses of the volunteer sample presented in this chapter produce some interesting findings that challenge some commonly held assumptions.

For one, contrary to the concept that people will tend to be less willing to offer their own time and energy to assist others when they feel they can count on government to help, very few people think that they might be less likely to volunteer were government to do more for their clientele. This is true even among the vast majority of those who express concern that government is not doing enough or is hurting people in need by cutting back services. Even those who thought government should do more did not see their efforts as a substitute, or an attempt to substitute, for government action. And those who thought that government was doing a poor job did not see their own efforts as an attempt to compensate

for governmental incompetence. Considering these results, it is difficult to believe that a "crowding out" phenomenon will occur if government is too involved, and conversely, it is difficult to believe that there will be an outpouring of voluntary activity to compensate a retrenchment of government services.

Second, it is significant that the vast majority of respondents defined the problems of the people they are trying to help as primarily "social" problems, and that only two percent thought the problems of their clientele were solely individual in nature. This helps to confirm the idea that one is only likely to be a volunteer if one can identify that society has at least a partial responsibility for the problems of the people one wants to help. People who primarily blame the individuals who are suffering for their own problems are not likely to come out to help those people. Thus, if we were to follow the advice of Marvin Olasky that charity should focus on the moral flaws of the individual that have, in his view, caused them to fall into conditions of need and dependency, then it would be logical to expect that far fewer people would get involved. They would instead figure that those people who are in need do not deserve their help.

In addition, we can see the importance of government policy and political rhetoric in affecting how individuals view the problems they are working on and the people they are trying to help. We can especially see evidence of this in the difference in answers between older volunteers, who came of age in a time when the idea that poverty is a social problem and that government should play a very active role in ameliorating poverty went unchallenged, and the younger volunteers, who came of age in a time when the welfare state

was under attack in both political action and rhetoric. How government acted and what government said in respective periods may well have affected the way these cohorts perceive of the nature of problems faced by people who are poor—older volunteers seeing them as social problems and younger ones more frequently seeing them as individual ones.

The data in this chapter and the previous chapter cast doubt on the idea that the relationship between government action and volunteerism is inverse. It also suggests that volunteers are usually motivated by a sense of empathy that is susceptible to being broken if our political leaders, through words and action, are able to persuade large numbers of people that those in need of assistance are in some way different, rather than just like, the rest of us. If this is the case, then we should expect human services volunteerism to rise when government and politicians act and speak with greater compassion, and to decline when political actors show less compassion. However, while the volunteers' motivations suggest this possibility, they do not provide proof that there is a positive relationship between governmental and voluntary action, that people will do more through volunteerism when government does more and less when government does less. Although absolute proof of the relationship these findings suggest is not available, there is significant evidence that this relationship exists.

CHAPTER FIVE: GOVERNMENT WELFARE AND PRIVATE GIVING

“Those who oppose replacing welfare with private charity often argue that there will not be enough charitable giving to make up for the loss of government benefits,” writes Michael Tanner in his book arguing for *The End of Welfare*. However, “...there is every reason to assume that charitable giving will increase in the absence of welfare. As we have already seen, welfare crowds out private charitable giving.” As evidence for this argument, Tanner provides a chart from the American Association of Fund Raising Council's “Giving USA,” which, he says, shows that “giving, which had been rising steadily throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, declined dramatically in the wake of the Great Society. In the 1980s, as the rise in welfare spending began to flatten out...the public responded by increasing private giving.” Most importantly, social welfare charity was affected even more than overall giving, since the proportion of philanthropic giving devoted to social welfare declined “in the wake of the Great Society” from 15 percent to 6 percent, went back up during the Reagan years, peaking at 11.6 percent in 1985, and then declined back to 9.9 percent by 1993, as “people again became convinced that government programs would take care of the poor.”⁶⁰

Conveniently, although Tanner writes in terms of the level of private giving in the

60 Michael Tanner, *The End of Welfare: Fighting Poverty in the Civil Society*, (Washington, D.C.: Cato Institute, 1996) p. 145-46.

United States, the chart he displays actually shows the percentage of personal income contributed, even though, in the very same publication where he obtained his chart, there is a chart tracing the pattern of actual giving in inflation-adjusted dollars, which I have translated into graphical form in Figure 5.1. Using this more relevant indicator of the historical relationship between government spending on social welfare and private giving, we may get a very different answer to the question of whether government withdrawal from welfare provision will be ameliorated by an outpouring of private philanthropy. In addition, Tanner fails to address the obvious effect that changes in the economic climate have had on giving. And while he does address the issue of the choices people make in where to put their charity dollars, he misrepresents the patterns of giving to social welfare causes compared to other causes by ignoring how this changed before the 1970s.

In this chapter, I will scrutinize the patterns of private charitable giving over the past half century to see whether the evidence upholds the argument of Tanner and other conservatives that government activism on social welfare “crowds out” private initiative to help people who are in need. This will help us to understand whether Tanner and other conservatives are right when they suggest that, if welfare were eliminated, “the people would more than rise to the occasion and meet the needs of the poor.”⁶¹

61 Tanner, p. 3.

**Scrutinizing the Relationship Between Government Welfare and Private Giving,
1955–1997**

At first glance, it is apparent that there is actually no statistical relationship between government spending on social welfare and private giving to charity, and a very strong relationship between the state of the economy and the amount of private giving. Statistical correlations among these variables create a clear picture of a relationship between the economy and private philanthropy.⁶² The percent change in total giving from year to year is positively correlated with the change in the median income (.392 with a two-tailed significance of .010), median family income (.570, sig. .000), Gross National Product per capita (.489, sig. .001.), and negatively correlated with the unemployment rate (-.459, sig. .002). Changes in individual giving are positively correlated with changes in median income (.443, sig. .003), median family income (.532, sig. .000) and per capita GNP (.454, sig. .003), and negatively correlated with unemployment (-.401, sig. .009). And change in the level of giving to human services organizations (those that are primarily dedicated to helping the poor) is positively correlated with median income (.306, sig. .049). But none of these indicators of private philanthropy are correlated with changes in the level of government

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Note: Giving USA statistics are based on Internal Revenue statistics of reported contributions. The statistics, however, include not only itemizers, but also an estimate of contributions from non-itemizers. This estimate is based on extrapolations based on the percentage of total contributions made by non-itemizers in 1985 and 1986, two years in which, under the Charitable Contributions Law, taxpayers who claimed the standard deduction were able to deduct for charitable contributions. Estimates of contributions received by type of recipient organization are based on surveys of organizations conducted by the American Association of Fund Raising Council Trust for Philanthropy.

social welfare or public aid.⁶³

Even when holding the economic variables constant in statistical regressions, relationships between the private giving and government spending variables fail to emerge. These findings do not uphold Tanner's argument, for private giving and public welfare do not seem to counteract each other.

However, simple statistical relationships do not always provide a complete picture of how different phenomena in our society relate to each other. There is a complex interrelationship between government welfare expenditures, the economy, and private philanthropy. This interrelationship emerges if we look at the recent history of private philanthropy, and divide this period into several periods in which there were vastly different trends. We can then examine how the interplay of economic, political, and other environmental factors differed from one period to the next and draw some ideas about how these factors may have helped to influence the changes in patterns of philanthropy.

In analyzing the connection between different philanthropic trends and these other environmental factors, I will be looking at several variables:

Measures of the level of private philanthropy. *Giving USA* provides tables showing the level of total private giving over the past half century and categorizing private giving

63. Measuring giving and government expenditure, and income figures in dollar amounts yields false positives, since all the dollar amounts regularly rise. Therefore, I measured the percentage change of each variable from year to year. Thus, we are actually measuring the rates of growth of these variables in relation to each other.

both by sources of giving (individuals, corporations, bequests and foundations) and by type of recipient organization (human services, religion, education, health, arts and culture, public/society benefit, environment/wildlife, and international affairs). We must examine several aspects of the giving statistics because the purpose of this study is two-fold--not only do we want to learn whether private philanthropy tends to emerge to play a greater role in providing for people in need when government plays a lesser role, and whether there tends to be less philanthropy when government is more active, but we also have on the table a deeper question about civil society: if the willingness to participate in society by giving to charity is one manifestation of a vigorous civil society, then we can try to assess whether what government does plays a role in fostering or dampening the amount of giving, not only to people in need, but to the full spectrum of charitable organizations. Therefore, it is necessary to use several measures of giving:

Giving to human services organizations is a measure of giving to organizations that are directly involved in helping people who are poor. It is the social welfare area of the charity community. Knowing whether this rises or falls with changes in the level of government social welfare will help us to know whether we can cut government provision with the expectation that private charities will fill the void. In order to learn this, we need to differentiate between overall giving--which includes giving to arts and cultural institutions, elite private educational institutions, religion, and the non-lobbying activities of organizations that are essentially political (i.e. government "watchdog" groups, "good government" organizations, etc.), and other non-profit organizations that are considered

charities but do not work directly to help people in need--from giving to organizations that are mostly dedicated to providing services for people in need, which fall under Giving USA's category of "human services."

Total private giving is giving to all charitable, non-profit organizations. This needs to be examined because the human services category is too narrow to account for all giving to help people who are poor. A portion of the giving to education, for example, may go to programs specifically designed to provide extra instruction for deprived children. A portion of giving to religion goes to church-based charity programs that assist the poor. Neither the human services nor the total private giving categories is adequate for telling us how much is actually being spent on assisting people who are poor, but looking at both will give us a fairly decent picture.

Individual giving, in isolation from giving by corporations, by bequeath, and by foundations, is important because it is a measure of social participation by actual people. While the other categories represent contributions of mainly elite groups, individual giving comes as close as we can get to an indication of popular support for charitable activities. If people become lax and depend on government to solve all problems when government is overly active, then individual giving should fall when government expenditures on social welfare rise. It would certainly be better to measure social participation by individuals by the number of people who contribute to charity rather than simply the amount of money contributed. But since there is no dependable historical data on numbers of contributors, we must rely on dollar figures.

Individual giving per capita. Giving is only an adequate measure of social participation if we measure it in proportion to the number of people who are available to give. The same level of giving in 1960 and 1980 would not indicate that private giving by individuals had stayed at the same level; it would actually indicate that a smaller percentage of people were giving in 1980 than in 1960. Therefore it is necessary to account for population growth.

Individual giving per number of people of prime giving age. Obviously, most children do not give to charity. In fact, people who are under the age of 25 and people over the age of 65 give very little to charity compared with the age groups in between. Therefore, in measuring the level of popular participation in charity through giving, we must account for this variable. For example, if the amount of money contributed to charity by individuals remained level from 1960 to 1980, and the population did not change, we cannot assume that the level of participation in giving remained the same because the number of people who might reasonably be expected to give may have changed. In this case, if the number of people in the 25 to 65 year-old group rose, and the amount of money contributed to charity stayed the same, this would have to be considered a decline in participation by individuals compared to the number of actual potential givers.

Measures of Government Welfare. Expenditure levels are a crude measure of government activism in assisting people who are in need, for there are many nuances to the provision of social welfare. However, dollar amounts is the only objective way to measure government provision from one period to another. There are two relevant ways in which

government activism must be measured:

Government social welfare expenditures. This includes all spending on what we call the “welfare state”—social insurance, public aid, health and medical programs, veterans’ programs, education, housing, and other social welfare. It is one measure of the overall level of generosity which our society chooses to express through government programs.

Government public aid expenditures is a subset of total social welfare expenditures which primarily consists of transfer payments to people who are poor.⁶⁴

Measures of the Economy. I expect that the amount of private philanthropy depends in part on the performance of the economy, or on how much people feel they can give considering the economic environment. Giving will be affected by how much expendable money people have, meaning we must consider statistics that measure personal income—the *median income* and the *median family income*. But it is also important to use a measure of overall economic performance, such as *per capita Gross National Product*, because this will impact on how confident people feel about the immediate future, as well as the *unemployment rate*, which affects people’s sense of economic security and thus affects whether they feel they can contribute to charity.

Measures of the Level of Need. Finally, the argument made by Tanner and others is that private individuals will step in to fill needs that are not fulfilled by government;

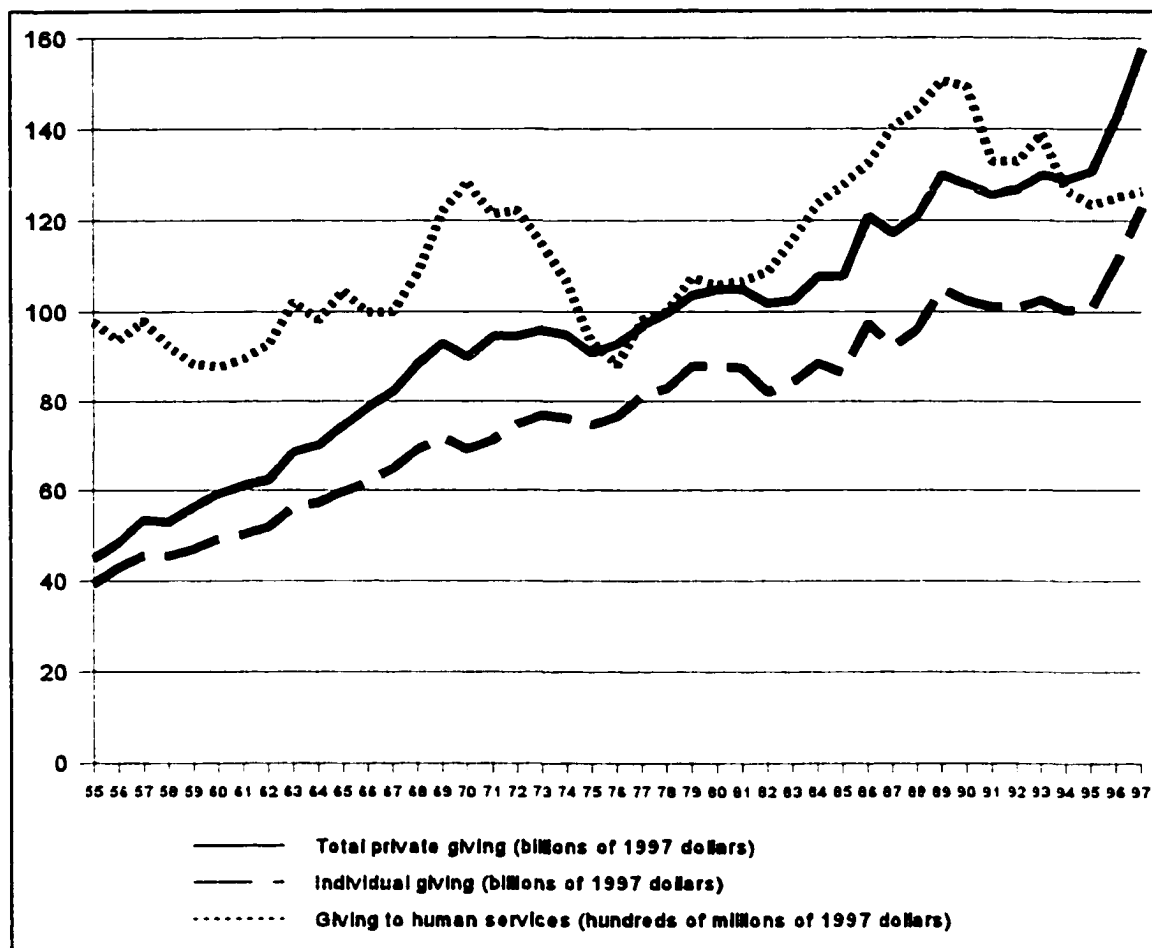
64 Charts presented in this chapter displaying economic trends and government spending on social welfare are based on data from the Statistical Abstract of the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, various years).

therefore, we must assess whether the response of the private community to a slowdown in government activism will be proportionate to the level of need that actually exists. In order to measure the amount of private philanthropy relative to need, we must create another variable: *private giving per person in poverty*.

Changing Trends in the Level of Private Philanthropy

Since 1955, several changes have occurred in patterns of private philanthropy (which can be seen in Figure 5.1), and in between these changes, we can identify several distinct periods in which the patterns of giving were significantly different from the previous period (meaning that the slope for at least one of the three giving variables--total giving, individual giving, or giving to human services--reversed or became noticeably steeper or flatter):

Figure 5.1. Total Giving, Giving by Individuals, and Giving to Human Services, 1955–97.



1. 1955 to 1960—Growth in giving, Decline in Human Services Giving

Between 1955 and 1960, the amount of giving to private charity grew impressively, from \$44.89 billion to \$59.26 billion, a 32 percent increase (or 6.4 percent per year). Giving by individuals increased by 25.16 percent, or 5.03 percent per year, reaching \$49.25 billion. Curiously, however, the amount of giving to human services organizations during this period

declined significantly, from \$9.79 billion in 1955 to \$8.76 billion in 1960, a 10.32 percent drop over five years. The percentage of private philanthropy dedicated to human services fell from 21.8 percent in 1955 to 14.7 percent in 1960.⁶⁵

2. 1960 to 1969--Dramatic Growth in All Areas of Private Giving

In the 1960s, all measures of private giving showed rapid growth. Total private giving rose by 57.1 percent, or 6.34 percent per year, reaching \$93.09 billion by the end of 1969. Giving by individuals increased by 45.75 percent, or 5.08 percent per year, reaching \$71.78 billion. Giving to human services turned around from the previous period when it was dropping dramatically. Between 1960 and 1970 (the boom in human services giving lasted a year beyond the boom in total giving), human services giving grew by 45.75 percent, or 4.58 percent per year, reaching \$12.87 billion.

While the general trend throughout the 1960s was a steep upward slope in each of these areas of private philanthropy, the growth was not uniform throughout the period. Between 1960 and 1963, total private giving and giving to human services both experienced an average annual growth of 5.21. Then, between 1963 and 1967, growth in total giving slowed very slightly, to 5.02 percent per year, but human services giving bounced up and down from one year to the next, actually decreasing by .51 percent per year. However, between 1967 and 1969, total giving increased by 6.57 percent per year, and giving to human services experienced record growth between 1967 and 1970, increasing at a pace of

65 All dollar amounts in this chapter are expressed in real, 1998 inflation-adjusted dollars.

9.57 percent per year. In 1970, human services accounted for 14.3 percent of all private giving.

3. 1970 to 1976--A Slump In Private Giving

In 1969, total private giving stood at a record \$93.06 billion, but for the next seven years private philanthropy would stagnate. By 1976, private giving amounted to just \$92.79 billion. Giving by individuals grew by less than a percent a year. Giving to human services organizations experienced the brunt of the slowdown in private philanthropy. From a record \$12.87 billion in 1970, human services giving plummeted to \$8.8 billion by 1976, a 31-percent drop. In 1976, human services giving represented only 9.48 percent of all private philanthropy.

4. 1976 to 1979--Philanthropic Recovery

Private giving to charity began to grow again over the next three years, although only modestly compared with the rate of growth of the late 1960s. Total giving increased by 3.88 percent per year to reach \$103.59 by the end of 1979, and giving by individuals grew by 4.88 percent per year to reach \$76.68 billion. Giving to human services dramatically reversed the trend of the previous several years, spurting to \$10.76 billion by 1979 by growing at an annual rate of 7.42 percent. In 1979, giving to human services accounted for 10.39 percent of all private giving.

5. 1979 to 1982--Another Reversal

Between 1979 and 1982, total giving to charity ceased its growth and then declined

to \$101.75 dollars in 1982. Giving by individuals dropped for three consecutive years to reach \$81.99 billion by 1982. After three years of near record growth, giving to human services suddenly dropped in 1980 by 1.67 percent, to \$10.58 billion, before recovering to \$10.9 billion in 1982, for an annual growth rate over the period of .43 percent.

6. 1982 to 1989--Boom Years Again

Between 1982 and 1989, private giving returned its greatest rate of growth since the 1960s. Private giving reached \$130.19 billion by 1989, rising by 27.96 percent over the period, or 3.99 percent per year, and giving by individuals rose by 4.02 percent per year. Giving to human services rose more steeply than overall giving, growing by 38.26 percent over the period, or 5.47 percent per year, and reached \$15.07 billion by 1989. In 1989, human services giving accounted for 11.58 percent of all private philanthropy.

7. 1989 to 1991--The Early 70s Revisited

Over the next two years, total giving shrunk by 3.42 percent, to \$125.74 billion, giving by individuals dropped by 3.98 percent to \$100.91 billion, and giving to human services dropped by 11.75 percent to \$13.3 billion.

8. 1991 to 1993--Another Upswing

In 1992, total private giving rose slightly over the previous year, and it grew more healthily in 1993, reaching \$130.02 billion. Giving to human services stopped declining in 1992, and then grew by 4.59 percent in 1993, to reach \$13.91 billion.

9. 1993 to 1995--A Sudden Drop

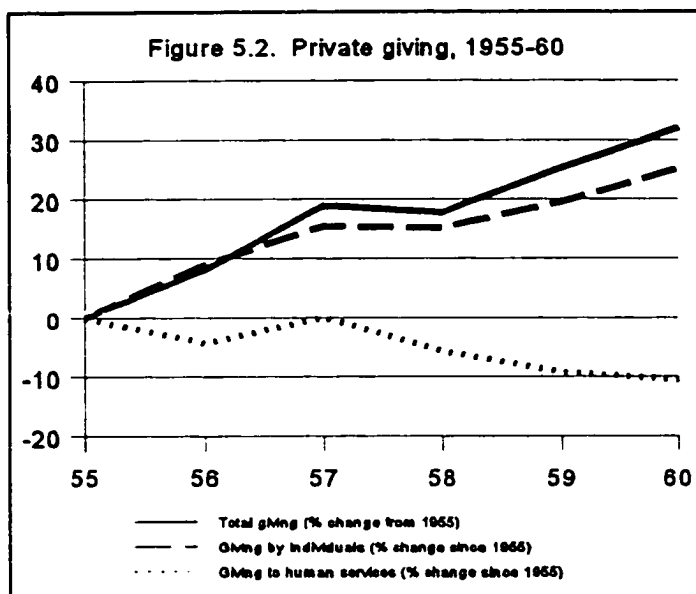
In 1994, following a year in which total private giving had grown by 2.47 percent and had appeared to be recovering, it suddenly dropped by .72 percent in 1994 before growing slightly again in 1995. By the end of 1995, private giving stood at \$130.89 billion. A year after growing by 1.85 percent, giving by individuals dropped by 2.36 percent in 1994, before growing slightly again in 1995. And giving to human services, which had grown by 4.59 percent in 1993, suddenly took a steep drop in 1994. From \$13.91 billion, human services giving fell to \$12.68 billion, a sudden, 8.84 percent drop. The following year, this category of giving experienced another decline of 2.6 percent, to reach \$12.35 billion by the end of 1995.

10. 1995 to 1997--Healthy Growth

Between 1995 and 1997, private giving returned to a strong growth rate, growing by a record annual rate of 10.24 percent and reaching \$157.69 billion. Giving to human services did not keep pace, but still grew by 2.51 percent per year to reach \$12.66 billion. Giving USA reports that human services giving experienced double-digit growth in 1998. However, it should be noted that Giving USA reports of giving often overestimate the growth of giving in recent years and are later revised with more modest estimates.

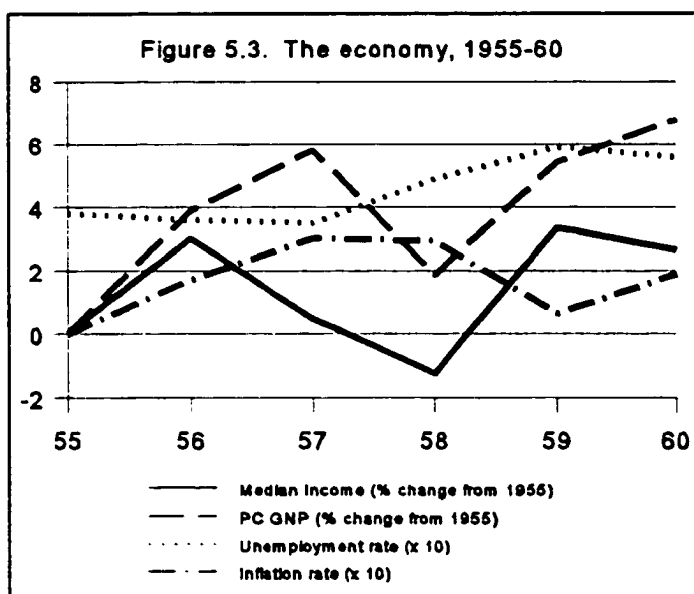
Private Giving in the Context of Different Economic and Political Environments

Having empirically identified 10 periods since 1955 in which there were significantly



different patterns of private philanthropy from the previous period, we can now examine how different economic and political trends within these periods may have affected these patterns of philanthropy.

1955 to 1960. As noted



previously, this period was marked by a healthy increase in private philanthropy, but by a sharp decline in giving to assist people in need through human services organizations.

The Economy and Private

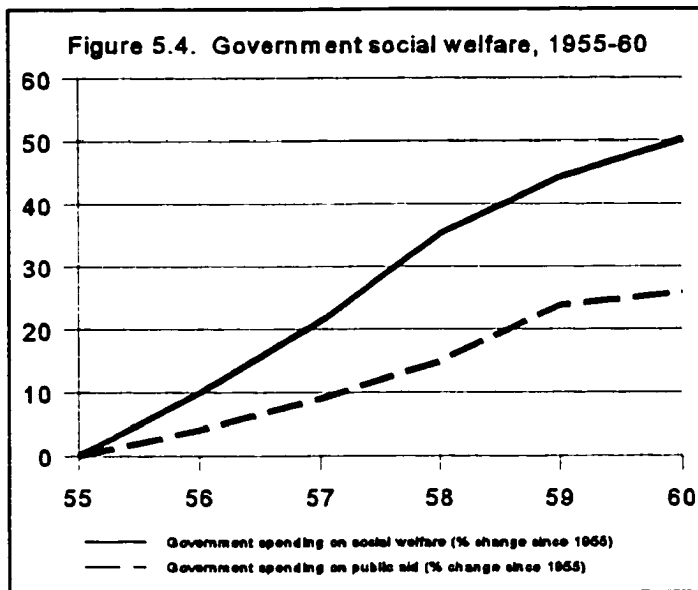
Giving: These were moderately

good years economically, marred by a recession in 1958 and the beginning of a new recession in 1960. Over the period, the median income increased a total of just 2.61 percent, or .52 percent a year, the median family income increased by 14.96 percent, or 2.99 percent per year, per capita GNP increased by 6.79 percent, or 1.36 percent per year, and unemployment increased from 4.4 percent to 5.5 percent.

Within the 1955–60 period, the logical expectation that the economy should have an impact on the level of private philanthropy—that people's willingness to give should depend at least in part with how economically secure they feel and how much money they feel comfortable about sparing—is in evidence. In 1958, when there was a major recession, when growth in per capita GNP slowed, the median income dropped, unemployment rose, and inflation was relatively high for the era, growth in private giving stopped, and giving to human services, which was actually beginning to rise in the previous year, experienced a major setback, from which it did not begin to recover until after 1960. A phenomenon which recurs in some later periods which will be examined is apparent here: when there is an economic slump, giving to human services, that area of private philanthropy mainly dedicated to helping people who are economically disadvantaged, suffers the most among all categories of giving. And, when human services giving declines, it also takes longer before it begins to recover than does private giving in general.

What is behind this tendency for human services giving to suffer the worst consequences when trouble in the economy causes philanthropic growth to cease? As I will explain in more detail later in this chapter, this may have to do with the demographics of giving. Among the various causes to which one can make charitable contributions, some—especially arts and culture and education, but also health and religion, etc.—go to institutions whose benefits are received in part or in whole by upper income groups. It is highly unlikely that people of more modest income will give charitable dollars to arts and culture institutions or elite private schools that mainly serve more well-off groups. And

since people of more modest income are likely to be the first to feel economic insecurity during a downturn in the economy, they will be the first to feel they are unable to make charitable contributions and therefore to withdraw their philanthropic efforts. In addition, it is likely that, if people from upper income groups feel the need to curtail their own

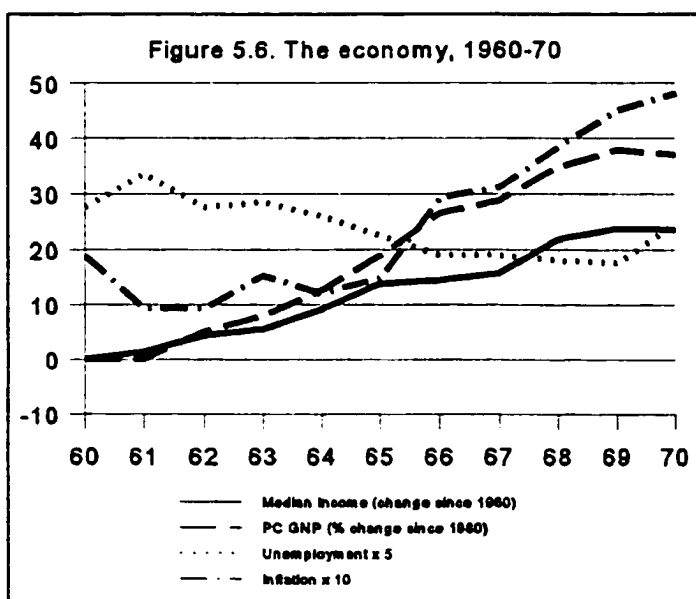
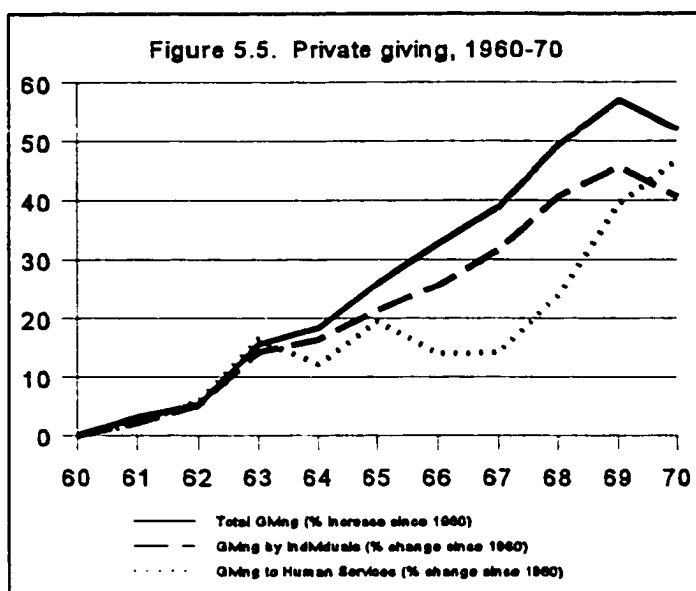


philanthropic efforts, they are not likely to cut back giving to the institutions that serve themselves. Thus, human services charities that provide help to people in economic need are likely to bear the brunt of cutbacks in private giving that occur during bad economic times.

Government Welfare and Private Giving: Between 1955 and 1960, government expenditures on social welfare increased by 50.28 percent (10.06% per year), and the amount of government spending on public aid (the subcategory of social welfare that consists of transfer payments to the poor) grew by 25.95 percent (5.19% per year). Compared with the later periods which will be examined shortly, the increase in government spending on the poor in particular was relatively modest during this period. As we will see, private giving to human services organizations that assist people in need experienced impressive growth when government assistance was growing more robustly.

Possible Factors in the Decline of Human Services Giving in the 1950s: Between 1955 and 1960, giving to human services declined dramatically, even though philanthropy in general was growing at a robust rate. While a full examination of the causes behind this phenomenon would require a detailed study, I think a fairly reasonable explanation exists. This was early in the movement of millions of middle-class Americans out of cities and to the suburbs. Large numbers of new suburban communities were still just being established and, consequently, there was a need for the establishment of new schools and colleges, new religious institutions, new hospitals, and other civic institutions in the new communities. Thus, as people were moving out of the urban areas where the greatest need for human services organizations to help people who are economically deprived existed, these organizations were receiving fewer contributions. Meanwhile, more charitable dollars were being contributed to other categories of recipients--education, religion, public/society benefit, and health. While further research would be needed to prove this hypothesis, there is data that seems to support it: during the 1955-60 period, the percentage of private giving dedicated to education rose from 4.49 percent to 6.78 percent, the percentage dedicated to religion rose from 20.29 percent to 26.94 percent, the percentage going to health increased from 4.78 percent to 5.11 percent (reaching 6.02 percent in 1959 before going back down), and the percentage going to public/society benefit increased from 1.31 percent to 1.69 percent. Meanwhile, not only did the percentage of giving dedicated to human services drop, but so did the percentage dedicated to art and cultural institutions, which declined from 4.49 percent in 1955 to 3.7 percent in 1960. Like people in need of human services, large art and culture institutions that eat up large amounts of philanthropic dollars are most likely

to exist in urban areas.



1960 to 1969. Since

private giving went in a generally upward direction throughout the 1960s, and since I want to avoid having an overwhelming number of distinct periods to contemplate, I have presented the 1960s as one period in the history of private philanthropy.

However, despite the general upward trend, this pattern was not uniform throughout the decade. From 1960 to 1963, both total private giving and giving specifically to human services followed a parallel course of solid growth. Then, in the middle of the decade, total giving continued

to grow while human services giving began to bounce up and down. Then, beginning in 1967, the growth rate of total giving accelerated, and giving to human services shot up at a

record pace. What factors were at play in the economy and in government policy that may have played a role in these shifts?

The Economy and Private Giving: After the end of the recession of 1961, the American economy began to boom beginning in 1962. Consequently, for the 1960–69 period, the median income grew by 23.8 percent (2.64% per year), median family income grew by 37.17 percent (4.13% per year), and the per capita GNP grew by 37.96 percent (4.22% per year). However, economic performance was not uniform throughout the decade, and neither was growth in the level of private philanthropy. While it is not easy to pick out clear patterns matching changes in the economic variables and giving variables throughout the decade, there are two interesting observations to be made. First, growth in the median income slumped between 1965 and 1967. After three years in which the median income grew by 3.49 percent and 4.19 percent, median income grew by only .63 percent in 1966 and 1.14 percent in 1967, before jumping by 5.26 percent in 1968. During this period in which median income--the economic statistic which arguably affects the average person the most--was relatively stagnant, giving to human services stagnated as well. This may be consistent with the trend, noted in the discussion of the 1955–60 period, for human services giving to respond most violently to changes in the economy, as the givers who are most likely to give to human services are also the most likely to feel economic insecurity when the economy is not performing well.

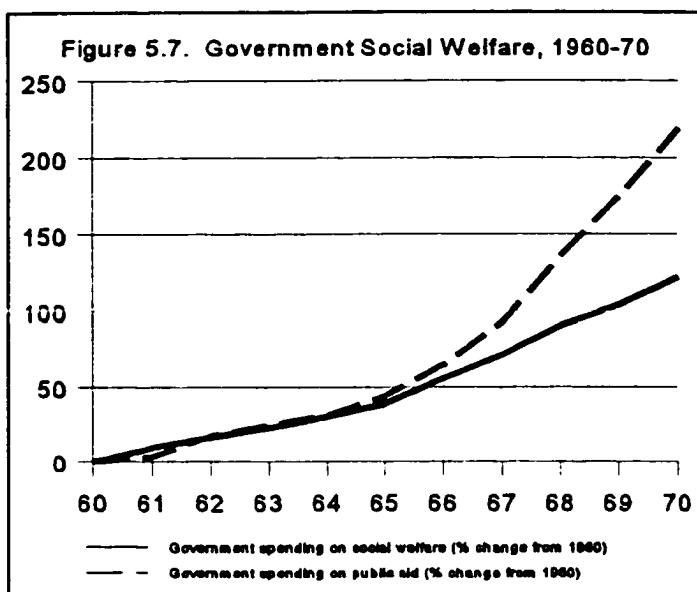
Second, the other year when there was a decline in human services giving, 1964, was also a year in which growth in total private giving slowed down. In 1963, total private

giving increased by 9.98 percent, and giving to human services increased by 10.14 percent. In 1964, growth in total giving was only 2.41 percent, and human services giving actually declined by 3.72 percent. The following year, total giving returned to its healthy rate of growth, and human services giving went up by 6.51 percent.

The temporary slowdown in private philanthropy in 1964 may have been in part a consequence of the 1964 tax cut. In February 1964, President Johnson pushed for, and Congress passed, a \$10 billion tax cut over two years, reducing the individual tax-rate range from 20 to 91 percent to 14 to 70 percent.⁶⁶ As Lester Salamon notes, because charitable contributions are tax deductible, a tax cut raises the actual cost of a charitable contribution. "For a taxpayer in the 70-percent tax bracket, the actual, out-of-pocket cost of giving a dollar to charity is really 30 cents, since 70 cents would have gone to the federal government anyway. Reduce the tax rate to 50 percent, and the price of giving that same dollar to charity rises to 50 cents, an increase of 67 percent."⁶⁷ It perhaps should not be surprising that, when the cost of giving was made more expensive to tax itemizers by the tax cut, the first item they removed from their charity budgets was human services, since other categories of giving, such as arts and education, which did not experience downturns, are categories that at least in part directly benefit those in higher income groups who are likely to be itemizers.

66 John A. Andrews, III, *Lyndon Johnson and the Great Society*, (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1998), p. 15.

67 Salamon, p. 169.



Not only should we expect a tax cut to result in some reduction in charitable donations by tax itemizers (which may or may not be canceled out by the increase in money available to contribute), but if the tax cut is anticipated in advance, we might also expect a rush to make

contributions before the tax cut become effective in order to obtain the full tax benefits of contributions. The 1964 tax cut was first proposed to Congress early in 1963, and was discussed throughout the year. Therefore, there may have been a rush to contribute in 1963, before the anticipated tax cut would go into effect, and this may account for the relatively steep increase in private giving in 1963. Manipulation of the tax rate, and of tax deductibility rules for charitable contributions, appear to be another significant factor to consider when analyzing changes in the level of private philanthropy.

Government Social Welfare and Private Giving: In discussing government social welfare in the 1960s, one has to divide the decade into two parts. Between 1960 and 1965, government spending on social welfare grew by 38.74 percent, or 7.75 percent per year, reaching \$39.68 billion. Government public aid grew by 44.04 percent, or 8.81 percent per year, reaching \$3.23 billion.

While the level of social welfare and public aid expenditures grew significantly in the first half of the decade, the second half saw an explosion of welfare spending. In March 1964, President Lyndon Johnson declared war on poverty in a special message to Congress, and, within the year, Johnson had pushed through Congress the Economic Opportunity Act, which created work training programs for unemployed youth, community action programs, adult basic education programs, voluntary assistance programs for needy children, programs to fight rural poverty and provide assistance for migrants and their families, employment and investment incentives for small business, work experience programs for unemployed fathers and mothers, and the VISTA program. The Head Start program began to operate in 1965, and 1965 also saw the creation of Medicare. Throughout the second half of the decade welfare rolls also exploded. Over the second half of the decade, total government spending on social welfare programs increased by 60.11 percent (12.02 percent per year), and spending specifically on public aid rose by nearly 121.85 percent (24.37 percent per year).

The rise in government spending on social welfare, especially on the provision of material assistance to the poor, did not produce the "crowding out" effect claimed by Tanner. Instead, private philanthropy to assist people in poverty also increased at a record pace. In particular, giving to human services rose by a record 9.57 percent per year from 1967 to 1970, even withstanding the beginning of the 1970 recession before beginning to fall in the economically troubled 1970s.

Public Rhetoric and Private Philanthropy: An increasing public awareness of poverty helped to drive the rapid increase in human services giving of the 1960s, and much

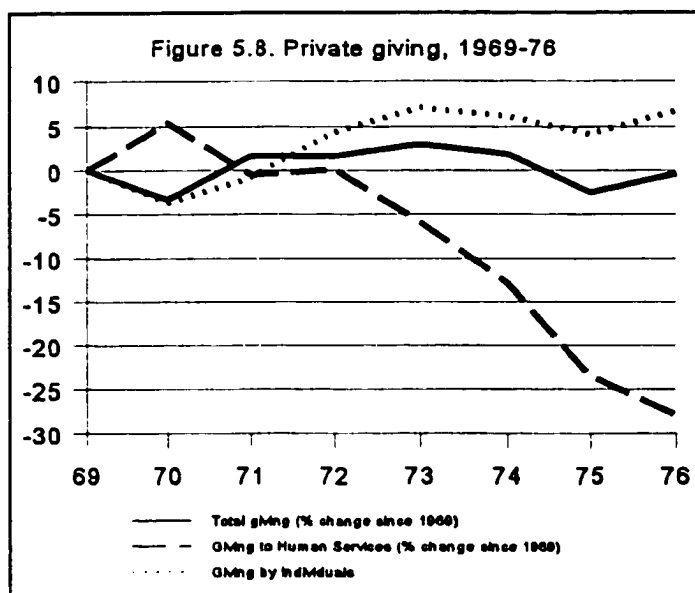
of this increasing awareness was encouraged by government actions. In 1959, the Federal government began to report the poverty rate, revealing that a shocking 21 percent of the population was officially impoverished. In the wake of the inception of public reporting on poverty, the American public began to hear a great deal about poverty in the media, most notably in Edward R. Murrow's revealing television documentary *Harvest of Shame* in 1960. In 1962, Michael Harrington's *The Other America* revealed to millions of people the extent of poverty in the United States and the severity of problems faced by people in poverty.

President Johnson's own efforts to promote anti-poverty legislation brought a tremendous amount of public attention to the facts of poverty and to the need to take action against it. In 1964, the President's Council of Economic Advisors reported not only that one-fifth of American families were poor, but also that 78 percent of them were white and a third were headed by a person over age 65.⁶⁸ Congressional hearings on the legislation were high-profile, with a parade of witnesses that was "as impressive as their testimony was haunting"⁶⁹ presenting the American public with more dramatic evidence of the size and extent of the problem of poverty and its real consequences for real people in America. The rise in private philanthropy to assist people in poverty needs to be seen not only in light of increased governmental attention to poverty as reflected in public policy; it also must be seen in light of the vast amount of publicity which the President and other supporters of the War on Poverty brought to the issue in order to bring about that governmental attention.

68 Andrews, p. 61.

69 Andrews, p. 66

1969 to 1976. During this period, growth in overall charitable giving stopped, and giving to human services suffered a steep decline. But this did not necessarily occur, as Tanner argues, because “people became convinced that government programs would take care of the poor.” In this economic squeeze, people simply had less money available to contribute.

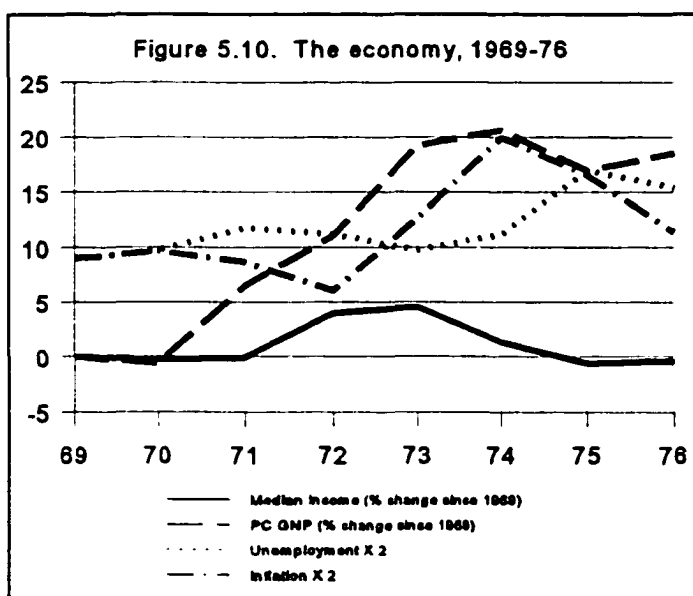
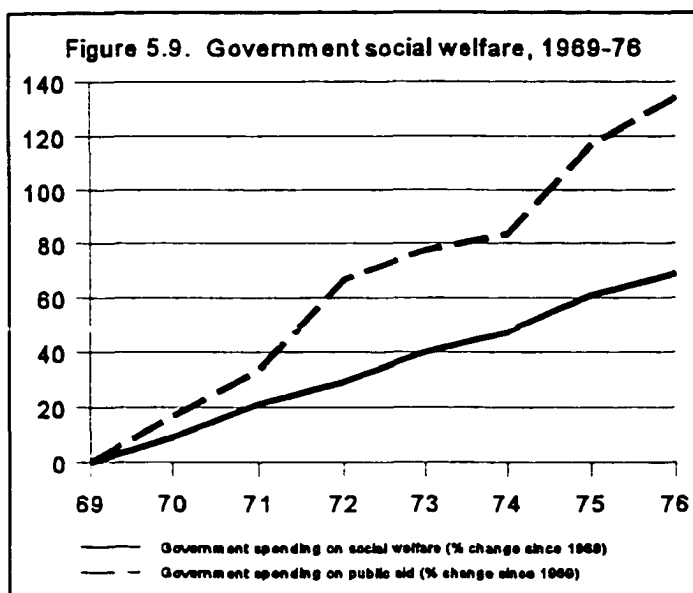


The Economy and Private

Giving: The early 1970s were marred by recessions in 1970–71 and 1974–75. From 1969 to 1976, median income dropped slightly, by .37 percent, over the period, and family income growth slowed to just 5.18 percent over the seven years, or

.74 percent per year, although per capita Gross National Product grew by over 18.59 percent, or 2.66 percent per year. During this period, the unemployment rate skyrocketed from 4.90 percent to 8.5 percent by 1974, before starting to drop modestly. Inflation became a major factor in the well-being of the American economy, reaching 8.29 percent in 1975.

What occurred in private philanthropy over these years was what we would expect in such an economic environment. In addition, the tendency for human services giving to be most severely hampered during bad economic times is most apparent during this period.

Government Welfare*Expenditures:*

Government spending on social welfare reached new heights, although it did not grow at quite the same pace it did in the late 1960s. Expenditures on social welfare grew by 68.86 percent, or 9.84 percent a year, and spending on public aid grew by 134.28 percent, or 19.18 percent per year.

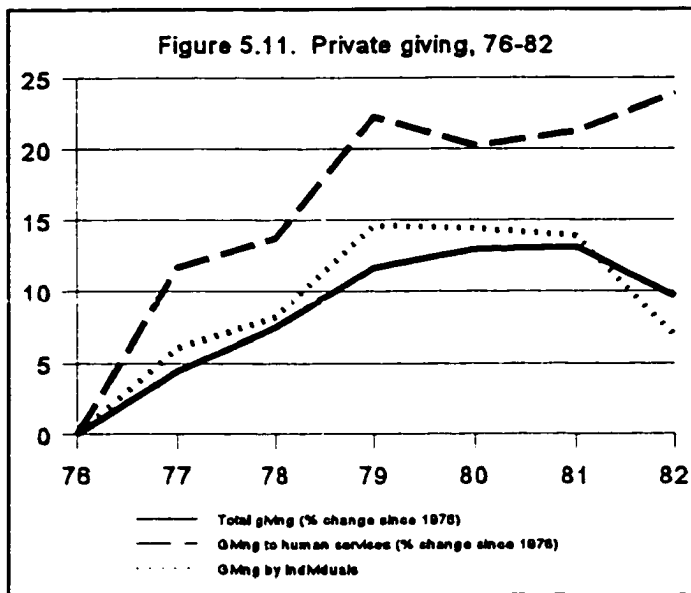
While it appears the slump in private philanthropy was mainly caused by the poor economic environment of this period, it is interesting to note

that, while giving to human services did not increase between 1970 and 1972, the actual decline in private giving began in 1973, exactly the same time that growth in government spending on public aid became much more modest than it had been previously.

1976 to 1979. After 1976, private philanthropy made a phenomenal comeback from its performance over the first part of the 1970s. Total private giving increased by 11.64, or 3.88 percent per year. After a disastrous drop between 1972 and 1976, giving to human services returned to a rate of growth close to the record growth of the late 1960s, increasing by 22.27 percent, or 7.42 percent per year.

The Economy and Private Giving: What made the growth in private giving in the late 1970s remarkable is that it occurred under fairly similar economic conditions to those of the previous several years. The 1976 to 1979 period saw continued economic troubles, with rising inflation and slow growth. From its 1976 level, median income slid by another 3.05 percent, and the median family income was stagnant. Per capita GNP grew by 4.24 percent per year, and unemployment declined to 5.8 percent, but inflation became a huge economic problem, reaching 9.63 percent by 1979.

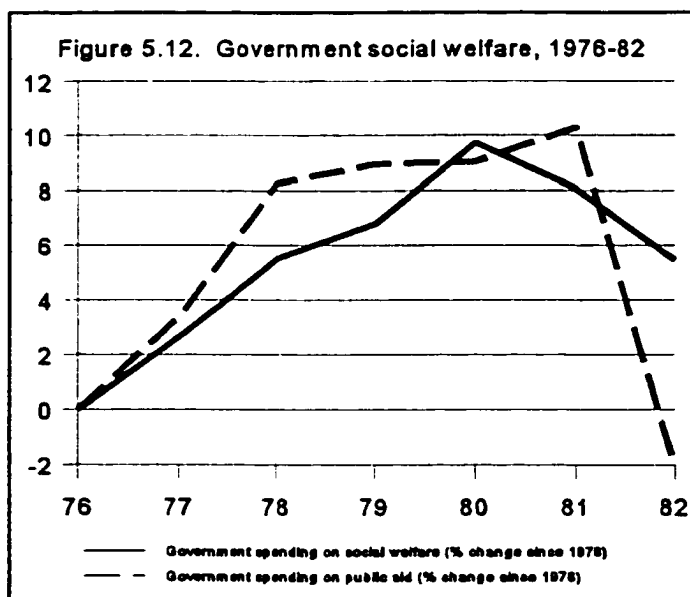
Government Welfare Expenditures and Private Giving: Government spending on social welfare grew at a much slower rate than it had over the previous 20 years, rising by an annual average of just 2.25 percent, and government expenditures on public aid grew by a mere 2.99 percent per year. That private philanthropy, especially giving to assist people in economic need, picked up at a time when government spending on social welfare dramatically slowed is an occurrence which provides support for the "crowding out" argument.



1979 to 1982. Amid a new set of political circumstances and largely unchanged economic circumstances, growth in private philanthropy dried up after 1979.

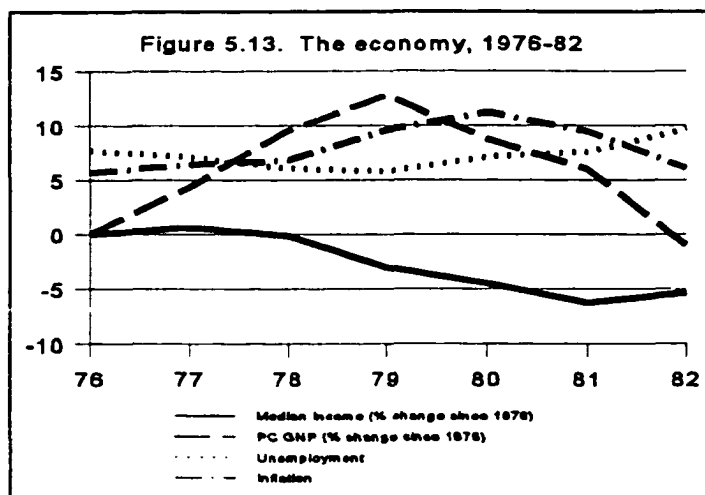
The Economy and Private Giving: Median income continued a downward spin which had been underway since

1978, inflation continued its upward spiral, reaching 11.22 percent in 1980 before beginning to gradually subside. Unemployment rose to 7.6 percent by 1981, and then jumped to 9.7



percent in 1982, and the per capita GNP declined in 1980, 1981, and 1982 a 12.2 percent drop over three years. Over this period, the median family income dropped by 12.25 percent. But, while in 1980, conditions were worse than they were in 1979, they were not

extremely different from conditions the previous year or two.



Yet, in the world of private philanthropy, conditions were very different. In the late 1970s, private giving had outperformed the sluggish economy. But beginning in 1980, total private giving followed the path of the

economy; after three years of four-percent annual growth in the late 1970s, private giving increased by only 1.17 percent in 1980 and by only .15 percent in 1981, and then declined by 3.06 percent during the full-fledged recession of 1982. Giving to human services suffered more immediately, especially in light of the three previous years of 7.4 percent average annual growth. Suddenly, in 1980, giving to human services dropped by 1.67 percent, to \$10.58 billion. In 1981, it grew by only .85 percent, and only in 1982 did it surpass its 1979 total by increasing by 2.16 percent to reach \$10.9 billion.

Interestingly giving by individuals, which had generally outperformed total giving during the tough years of the 1970s, fell much more dramatically than did total giving between 1979 and 1982. In 1979, individual giving experienced its fourth straight year of growth, increasing that year by a robust 5.94 percent and reaching \$87.92 billion. In 1980, this trend reversed, with a .22 percent decline to \$87.73 billion. In 1981, individual giving declined another .47 percent, and in 1982, it plummeted by 6.10 percent to reach \$81.99

billion. So over three years, while total giving declined by 1.78 percent, individual giving declined by 6.74 percent. From 85 percent of total giving in 1979, individual giving made up only 80.5 percent of total giving by 1982, as the recession apparently hit individual givers harder than it did corporate contributors.

Government Welfare Expenditures and Private Giving: Between 1980 and 1982, government spending on social welfare in real dollars declined for the first time in the post-war period. Under new President Ronald Reagan, government welfare expenditures dropped by 3.9 percent, and spending on public aid dropped by 10.12 percent.

That the decline in government spending was accompanied by a decline in private philanthropy across the 1980 to 1982 period would seem to hold some evidence for the argument that a reduction of government attention to issues of social welfare will foster an atmosphere in which fewer people are willing to contribute their own effort and their own dollars to help people in need. However, the decline in giving, particularly in the area of human services to people in need, preceded the major cutback in government spending to address the problems of poor Americans, which occurred in 1982. To find a relationship between what occurred in private philanthropy and the actions of government, we need to look behind the cuts to social services and understand the impact of the political rhetoric that led up to and justified these cutbacks.

The Rhetoric of the Reagan Revolution: In 1980, Ronald Reagan campaigned for president by fusing a variety of crises the country was facing into a picture of an enervated nation, whose energy had been drained by an overbearing government. Argued the Reagan

campaign, government intervention and regulation had stymied the innovation of the private business sector, resulting in severe unemployment and inflation and a feeling of insecurity for large numbers of people; people had become lax in their morals and overly dependent on government; the country had even lost the will to defend its interests abroad, which had led to Soviet aggression in Afghanistan and the indignity of the Iranian hostage crisis. Reagan wanted to invigorate the private sector through a 30 percent cut in income taxes for individuals and business over three years, among other tax relief measures, and by lifting government rules that he claimed cost consumers \$120 billion dollars a year. He proposed to increase spending on the military in order to build "American power and prestige to the point where the country can deter its enemies and reward its allies."⁷⁰ And he pledged to cut back the size of government, including elimination of the Departments of Energy and Education, to reduce social programs and ensure that only the truly needy would receive benefits, and to turn many federal welfare programs over to state and local governments, along with the responsibility to pay for them.

Welfare was not singled out *per se* as a focus of Reagan's attack on big government, but was part of an overall portrait of a country that had fallen into a state of what President Jimmy Carter had admitted was a "malaise." Reagan called for a "New Beginning", which meant getting government off the backs of the people and allowing the creativity and innovation of individuals, which he claimed was being smothered, to again flourish. And this included the poor, who had fallen victim to a system which had "deliberately

70 John W. Mashek, "Reagan: What He Stands For," *U.S. News and World Report*, May 5, 1980.

perpetuated a status of federally subsidized poverty and manipulated dependency for millions of Americans," and who thus "remain pawns of the bureaucracy, trapped outside the social and economic mainstream of American life."⁷¹ Thus, poverty was interpreted as less a result of the failings of the market system than as the personal responsibility of those who had fallen into poverty, and it was their responsibility to right themselves.

While welfare was not a specific focus of the campaign, the Reagan campaign and its rhetoric helped to foster a general mood that did not look kindly on public assistance. He called for a "return to those older economic verities of hard work, self-reliance, and limited government that had ostensibly made the American economy the wonder of the world."⁷² He described himself as leading a crusade to "take the government off the backs of the great people of this country and turn you loose again to do those things that I know you can do so well, because you did them and made this country great."⁷³ Reagan communicated an optimistic message that contrasted calls for sacrifice on the part of the Carter campaign. As Wilson Carey McWilliams put it at the time, Reagan "presents himself as the defender of the American 'fifth freedom,' the right to consume, and he assures us that we will enjoy that liberty in his term of office." Reagan's proposals turned on the notion that "less restraint--a massive tax cut--can stimulate investment and productivity enough to offset inflation.

71 Republican Party Platform, from *Congressional Digest*, January 1980.

72 Henry A. Plotkin, "Issues in the Presidential Campaign," in Gerald Pomper, *The Election of 1980: Reports and Interpretations*, (Chatham House: New Jersey, 1981), p. 50.

73 "Transcript of the Carter-Reagan Debate," *New York Times*, Oct. 29, 1980, p. A28.

Self-indulgence takes the place of self denial."⁷⁴ Thus, the strategy for economic recovery was not to call for the people to come together and sacrifice in an effort to improve the situation, but to call for enabling people to pursue individual profit more vigorously.

At the same time, there was a new emphasis on social issues, taking advantage of the perception of many that traditional values were being threatened by the social and cultural upheavals of the past two decades. And the responsibility for the decline of the moral climate was laid "at the feet of a government that had been too indulgent, too tolerant of what many saw as moral excesses."⁷⁵ Dependence on welfare was increasingly being defined as one of the consequences of this indulgence of moral excesses, with the rise of racially charged stereotype of the "welfare queen."

This is not to argue that there was an overwhelming swing in public opinion on the issue of social welfare. According to the General Social Survey, about 60 percent of the public thought the government spent too much on welfare, about the same as in 1978. However, the general public mood could be aptly described as one of discontent with big government programs, with a sense that the country had lost its moral bearings, and a belief that self-reliance and the vigorous pursuit of self-interest were keys to the country's renewal. In such an atmosphere, there may have been a sense that, if one could not succeed, this was a failure of individual will rather than of society.

74 Wilson Carey McWilliams, "The Meaning of the Election," in Pomper, *op. cit.*, p. 183-84.

75 Plotkin, p. 51.

Nor is this to argue that there is a direct, concrete connection between the rise of Reaganism and a sudden drop in generosity toward people who are poor as expressed in levels of giving to charities that serve the poor. But it does seem that, after several years of economic stagflation in which giving to charities that serve the poor had been growing, the sudden drop may have had something to do with a change in the public mood, which may have been fostered by the rhetoric of the Reagan campaign.

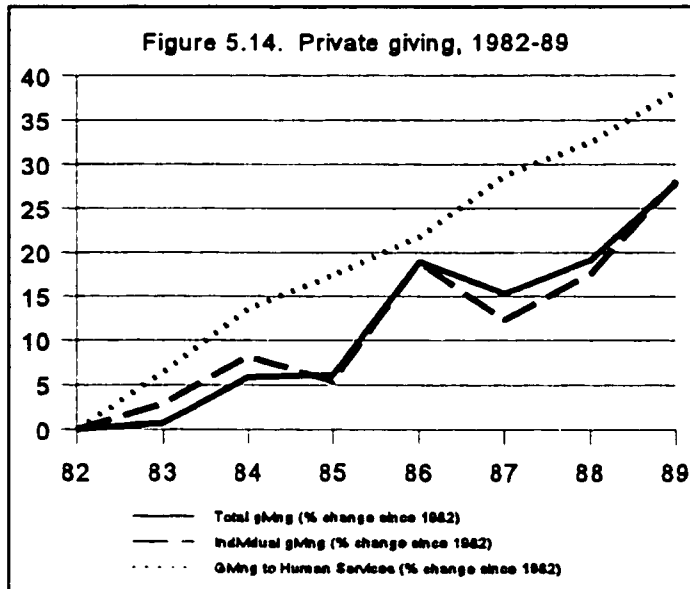
The 1981 Tax Cut: It could be argued that private giving declined due to a reduction in taxes that was passed at the beginning of the Reagan Presidency. In early 1981, President Reagan pushed through Congress most of his economic program, which reduced levels of spending on a host of domestic programs and included a major tax cut. Under the Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981, taxes were to be cut by \$747 billion over five years.⁷⁶ As noted earlier, a reducing taxes increases the cost of charitable contributions for tax itemizers, and therefore should result in a reduction in charitable contributions. Estimated analysts of the effects of the tax changes on the non-profit sector, the changes "discouraged donations by an estimated \$10 billion" between 1981 and 1984.⁷⁷ However, while the new tax program may have had some impact on the decline in total private giving in 1982, it should be noted that the decline in the measures of private giving under consideration began in advance of the tax cut, or even the Reagan presidency; they began during the 1980

76 Thomas Byrne Edsall and Sidney Blumenthal, *The Reagan Legacy* (Pantheon, New York, 1988), p. 9-10.

77 John L. Palmer and Isabel V. Sawhill, *The Reagan Record*, (Urban Institute, Washington, D.C., 1984), p. 18.

presidential campaign when, I contend, there was an onslaught of individualistic rhetoric that dampened people's sense of charity.

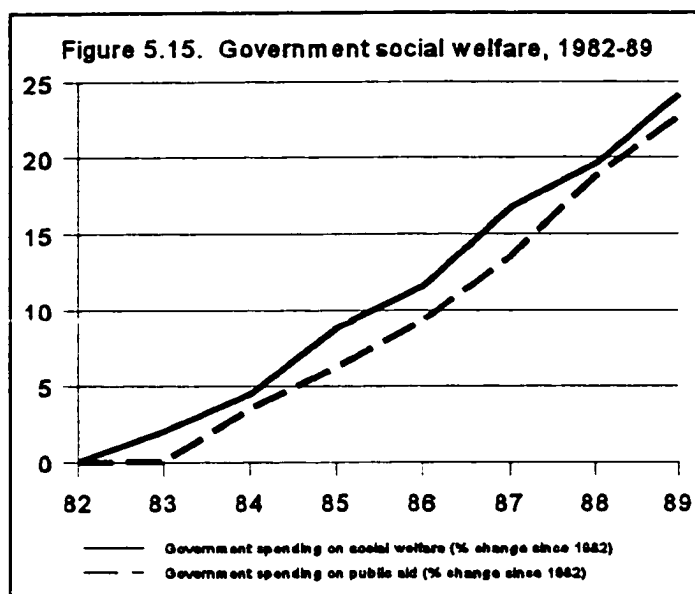
It is interesting that, unlike in 1963, when there was a jump in private giving probably in anticipation of the 1964 tax cut, there was no such bump in giving in 1980. It appears, simply, that while people were in the mind to give to charity in the late 1970s despite economic insecurity, fewer people were in that mood during 1980.



1982 to 1989. Over this seven-year period, private philanthropy achieved solid growth. Total giving increased by nearly 28 percent, or by 3.99 percent per year, and giving by individuals experienced a nearly identical rate of growth. Giving to human services organizations

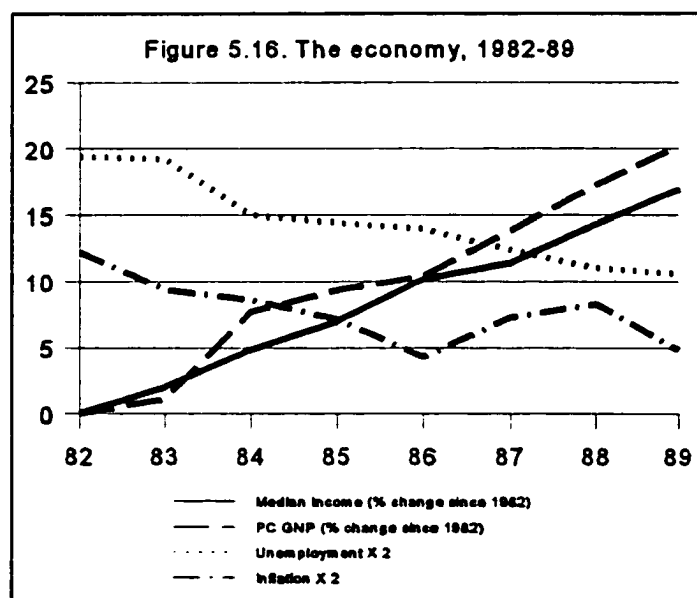
rose by 38.26 percent, or by 5.47 percent per year.

The Economy. These years were times of consistent and substantial, if overrated, economic growth. The median income rose 16.87 percent, or 2.41 percent a year from its 1982 level. The median family income rose by 12.56 percent, or 1.8 percent a year from its 1982 low. Per capita GNP rose by 20.16 percent from its 1982 low, or 2.88 percent a year.

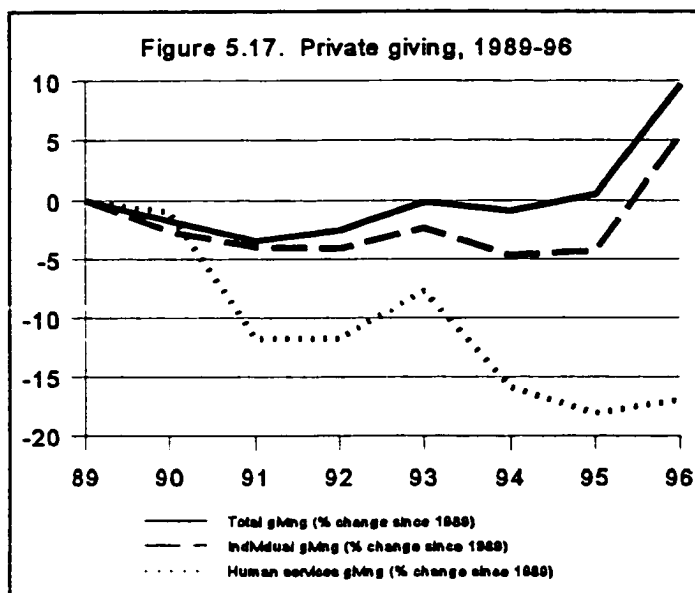


Unemployment, which stood at 9.7 percent in 1982, was reduced to 5.3 percent by 1989. If economic security and a sense of being able to afford to contribute is a major factor in determining the level of private giving, then the growth in philanthropy over this period is predictable.

Government Welfare Expenditures. Under a conservative administration, government welfare spending grew slowly in the 1982-89 period. Total social welfare



expenditures grew by 24.15 percent, or 3.45 percent per year, and spending on public aid rose by 22.7 percent, or 3.25 percent a year. Here we can see that private philanthropy showed robust growth in an atmosphere of stingy government social welfare policy.



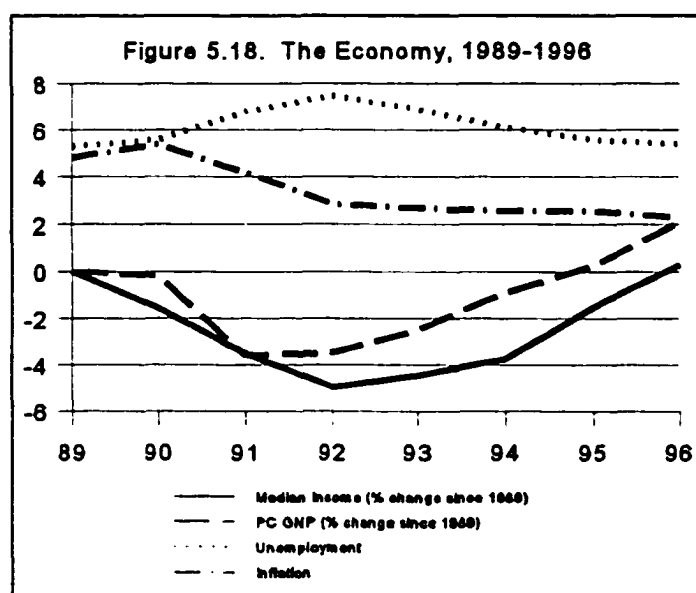
1989 to 1992. *The Economy and Private Giving:* Tanner claims the decline in philanthropy in the early 1970s, particularly the dramatic drop in giving to human services programs, was the consequence of people having become dependent upon government to

take care of the needs of the poor, and was also a form of "compassion fatigue," as huge and growing government programs to assist the poor had an enervating effect on private voluntary initiative. However, a very similar trend in philanthropy occurred a decade later, in the recession that followed the economic boom of the later Reagan years. Between 1989 and 1992, median income dropped by 4.96 percent from its 1989 level, median family income declined by 5.52 percent, and per capita GNP declined by 3.47 percent. Unemployment rose from 5.3 percent in 1989 to 7.5 percent in 1992. As in the early 1970s, giving to human services dropped far more precipitously than did total giving. Clearly, compassion fatigue was not what was at play in this instance--in both the early 1970s and the early 1990s, private philanthropy stalled because of difficult economic circumstances.

Government Welfare Expenditures. Between 1989 and 1992, government social welfare spending rose at a slightly more rapid pace than during the Reagan years, increasing by 14.96 percent, or 4.99 percent per year. The pace of growth in spending on public aid

increased significantly, rising by 40.09 percent over the three years, or 13.36 percent per year.

1992 to 1995. After 1992, for the second time in this history, the level of private philanthropy bucked its usual trend and moved in the opposite direction from the economy.

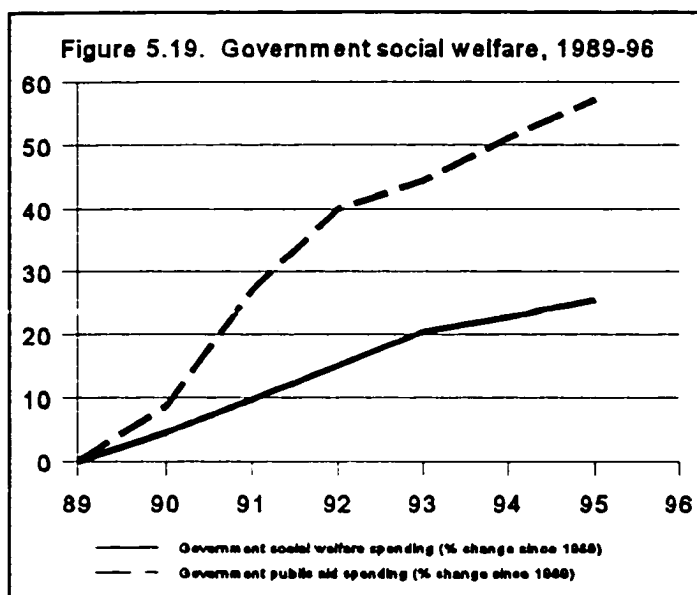


The Economy and Private

Giving: Between 1992 and 1993, the economic recovery that continues as of this writing began. Median income rose by .51 percent in 1993, .76 percent in 1994, and 2.32 percent in 1995. Median family income declined in 1993, but then rose by 2.31

percent in 1994 and 1.83 percent in 1995. The per capita GNP went up by 1 percent in 1993, 1.67 percent in 1994, and 1.15 percent in 1995. Unemployment, at 7.5 percent in 1992, went down each year, reaching 5.5 percent by 1995. After three years of decline, the economy was heating up, although only modestly.

As the economy began to perform better, we should expect that private giving would begin to rise again as well, and it did between 1992 and 1993. Total private giving, which dropped in 1990 and 1991, rose by .91 percent in 1992 and by 2.47 percent in 1993. Giving to human services, which dropped precipitously in 1990 and 1991, leveled off in 1992 and



then grew by a healthy 4.59 percent in 1993. These growth figures might have been stronger if not for the highly publicized scandal at the United Way which was in the news throughout 1992 and in early 1993.

However, in 1994, there was a sudden drop in private philanthropy, by .72 percent, and a stunning drop in giving to human services in particular; after the 4.59 percent gain in 1993, giving to human services dropped by 8.84 percent, a historic swing of 13.43 percent. While total giving recovered the following year, human services giving declined again in 1995, by another 2.6 percent, reaching \$12.35 billion. In 1994, for the second time (the first being 1980), there was a sudden and major downturn in private giving that could not be explained by a significant change in the direction of the economy. How can we explain such a shift?

Government Welfare Expenditures and Private Giving: In the 1992–95 period, the rate of growth in government social welfare expenditures significantly slowed down from the pattern of the previous three years. Total social welfare spending increased by 9.13 percent, or 3.04 percent per year. Spending on public aid rose by 12.19 percent, or 4.06 percent per year. The decline in giving to human services occurred at the same time as a decrease in the growth rate of public welfare, and thus this phenomenon cannot be explained

by the arrival of a “liberal” administration that raised welfare spending and thus bred a sense of dependence on government to take care of the problems of poverty.

Political Rhetoric and the Public Mood; the Anti-Welfare Revolution of 1994: To understand the environment that fostered the sudden decline in private giving to the cause of assisting people in need in 1994, we must again look behind the public policy of the period, at the political rhetoric of the time.

While welfare was not directly a focal point of the 1980 election, one can easily see that discontent with the welfare system may have been high among people who were working hard but struggling to get by in a period of severe inflation and unemployment, who may have had trouble understanding why, when they work so hard, others are supported through their tax dollars for doing nothing at all. However, in 1994, during a time when, by all signs, a strong economic recovery was in progress, the Republicans were able to ride a new wave of public anger at government and its social programs to take over both houses of Congress for the first time in 40 years.

This time, welfare was not a mere side issue, but one of the central issues in the campaign. Said Frank Lutz, the Republican pollster credited with designing the 1994 congressional Republicans' “Contract with America,” “If you want to see anger, just look at the white male struggling to make ends meet with three jobs, and see how he feels about welfare mothers.” Lutz advised Republican candidates to take advantage of this anger:

"Talk about denying cash benefits to people who have more kids while on welfare."⁷⁸

Indeed, despite the economic recovery, many Americans were continuing to struggle economically, as it appeared that positive statistics in terms of unemployment, inflation, GNP growth, and other traditional economic indicators were no longer telling the whole story about the situation of the average person--between 1973 and 1992, the real income of people in each of the bottom three quintiles declined, while the income of the top fifth rose substantially. Even in the current economic recovery, many people were not seeing real wage growth, and at the same time were being made to feel insecure by corporate downsizing and the continued replacement of manufacturing jobs with jobs in the growing but lower-paying service economy. In a Time/CNN poll in December 1994, 61 percent of those surveyed agreed with the statement that "the way things are today, people have to worry more about themselves and their families and less about helping others." Concluded the Time Magazine article that reported these findings, "Even in a year of mostly favorable economic indicators--a 2.6% inflation rate, 3.9% third-quarter growth, 5.6% unemployment for November--a middle class fearful of losing its economic footing is plainly of a mind to hunker down....Given enough encouragement, a good many Americans might be persuaded to vent their anxieties upon the classes just beneath them."⁷⁹

As in 1980, welfare was in the vortex of issues that the Republicans used to capitalize on this anger. "Politicians could easily see that welfare was a lightning rod issue. With the

78 Susan J. Tolchin, *The Angry American*, (Westview: Boulder, Coiorado, 1996), p. 7.

79 Richard Lacavo, "Down on the Downtrodden," *Time*, December 19, 1994, p. 31-32.

mention of the words 'welfare reform', one could stir up deep-seated anger from a variety of groups, many of whom were likely to vote. 'Welfare reform' might be a code word for racial stereotyping, or for excessive government spending, or for bloated government bureaucracies, or for misguided liberal attempts to engineer society. When politicians come across an issue that can stir up so many emotions in so many people, they do not often hesitate to use it."⁸⁰

Of course, "ending welfare as we know it" had been a promise of Bill Clinton's in the 1992 campaign. But while imposing time limits and work requirements on welfare recipients, Clinton's plan also promised to provide child care, job training, and an increase in the Earned Income Tax Credit, all of which would assist and rehabilitate welfare recipients. His plan proposed to spend more on welfare in the near-term in order to help people get off welfare.⁸¹ But the Republicans would not pass Clinton's plan, raising instead their own plans for more radical welfare reform, which would not only cap spending and eliminate the child care and work training provisions, but would also end welfare to most non-citizens and abolish over 100 federal programs and replace them with grants to states, which would be free to do with them what they pleased.⁸² While the Clinton plan proposed to spend more on welfare in the short-term, the Republican plan promised to begin decreasing expenditures immediately.

80 Anne Marie Cammisa, *From Rhetoric to Reform?: Welfare Policy in American Politics*, (Westview: Boulder, Colorado, 1998) p. 71.

81 Cammisa, p. 65

82 Lacavo, p. 31-32

So instead of approving President Clinton's plan, the Republicans chose to introduce their own, and to make it a major campaign issue. The *Contract with America* proposed to require "welfare recipients to take personal responsibility for the decisions they make," instead of relying on government programs that had "bred illegitimacy, crime, illiteracy, and more poverty." It offered a plan to "reverse skyrocketing out-of-wedlock births that are ripping apart our nation's social fabric" by denying welfare to teenage parents and requiring that "paternity and responsibility be established in all illegitimate births where welfare is sought." It promised to "require that welfare beneficiaries work so they can develop the pride and self-sufficiency that comes from holding a productive job."⁸³ And it promised to end the entitlement status of AFDC and SSI by setting a strict cap on federal expenditures on these programs.⁸⁴

In 1993 and 1994, during the course of the campaign, anti-welfare rhetoric, emphasizing the need for people in poverty to take "responsibility" for their own problems and decisions, was a major Republican theme. Around the same time, a demonstrable change in public opinion on welfare appears to have occurred, although it is hard to know whether the intensification of anti-welfare rhetoric or the shift in public opinion came first. In 1993, 57.3 percent of the respondents on the General Social Survey expressed the belief that government spends too much on welfare, up from 39.3 percent on the previous survey in 1991. In 1994, this number increased to 62.4 percent. Asked whether government should

83 Gingrich, Arney, & the House Republicans, *Contract with America*, (Random House: New York, 1994), p. 65.

84 Gingrich, p. 72

do more or less to improve the standard of living of the poor, 8.9 percent thought people should help themselves, a number which rose to 10.1 percent of respondents in 1993 and 11.3 percent of respondents in 1994. The Gallup Poll, which asks the open-ended question, "What do you think is the most important problem facing this country today?--found in January 1993 that 15 percent of the respondents mentioned "poverty" or "homelessness," making these together the second most oft-mentioned "non-economic" problem. In January 1994, for the first time ever, "welfare" appeared on the list of non-economic problems for the first time in the more than four decades that this question had been asked. Six percent of respondents mentioned "welfare" as the most important non-economic problem. Interestingly, the number of people mentioning "poverty; homelessness" dropped to nine percent, down that same six percent from the previous year. In January 1995, the number of people mentioning "welfare" as the most important non-economic problem reached 12 percent, while 10 percent of respondents mentioned "poverty; homelessness."⁸⁵

While there is always a good deal of public hostility toward welfare, the public was infused with a strong consciousness about a need for welfare reform between 1993 and 1995. And concomitant with a growing belief--effected in part by the Republican rhetoric of this political season--that welfare recipients needed to be forced to take responsibility for their own problems instead of depending on the public dole, came a sudden and severe drop in private giving to charity, especially to charities that help the poor. As noted earlier, in 1994, a year after total giving increased by 2.47 percent, total giving dropped by .72

85 Gallup Polls, 1994, 1995.

percent despite an improving economy. Giving by individuals, up 1.85 percent the previous year, declined by 2.36 percent in 1994. Human services giving was very hard hit--up 4.59 percent the previous year, it dropped in 1994 by 8.84 percent, a record, -13.43 percent downswing. In 1995, while there was a modest recovery in the other areas of private giving, giving to human services plunged by another 2.6 percent before finally recovering the following year. As *Time* magazine reported in December 1994:

"When all the benefit slashing is over, who picks up where government leaves off? Many private charities that focus on the needy report dangerous signs of slippage in donations. At food banks across the country, there has been a sizable drop-off. At the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank, for example, this year's funding drive brought in \$450,000 a decline of \$70,000 from 1993. In Toledo, Ohio, the number of families asking for emergency food baskets increased 10%. Donations? Down by almost half. Food baskets that used to include whole turkeys now provide turkey parts and surplus government commodities....Organizers also sense a grudging mood among private donors. The attitude, says Joyce Ruthermel, executive director of Pittsburgh's food bank, is "not only do we not want our tax dollars to do it, we don't want to do it either."⁸⁶

1994, like 1980, was a year in which there was a significant political change, in which the out-of-power party in one branch of government used anger at "big government"

86 Lacavo, p. 31-32

in order to oust the party in power. In both of these cases, in the first more subtly than in the second, welfare was a highly significant and salient issue, and attitudes about people in poverty and their responsibility—rather than society's—for their situation was communicated to the public. In both cases, especially in the second case, in which the message was made very directly, the public responded not only by voting into office the party that promised a harsher line (or perhaps “tough love”) toward the poor, but also by reducing its level of expression of generosity to the poor through giving to private charity. In both cases, this occurred after years in which giving to charity had been growing at a healthy clip.

1995 to 1997. This period is a bit recent to analyze accurately; in particular, figures from *Giving USA* on private philanthropy are often readjusted several years after the fact, usually to correct for overestimates of giving growth. And the published figures for the measure of government welfare spending I am using (which includes all government spending including federal and state) often have to be revised as well. However, some observations can be made.

Between 1995 and 1997, the economic expansion continued and strengthened, with median income and median family income growing over three percent a year, and unemployment shrinking to 4.9 percent. By all traditional measures, the economy was very strong. As one could predict, private giving to charity also showed strong growth. In fact, total giving experienced record growth, increasing by 20.5 percent over two years, or 10.24 percent a year. (In 1998, total giving grew by nearly nine percent.)

There was also a major change in public policy, with the passage of the Personal Responsibility Act of 1996. A “crowding out” theorist might attribute the increase in private giving that occurred in 1996 and 1997 to a public response to this legislation; having shucked much responsibility for the poor, it could be argued that the government also re-energized private initiative to assist the poor. More potential givers (as well as volunteers), no longer feeling they could rely on government to provide help to the poor, and no longer experiencing “compassion fatigue” that results from huge government programs, manifested their desire to help, and thus we saw a record increase in the level of private philanthropy.

It is interesting, however, to scrutinize the composition of the dramatic rise in total private giving from \$130.89 billion in 1995 to \$157.69 billion in 1997. Giving to education increased by 5.79 percent over the two years (to reach \$21.51 billion). Giving to religion rose by 7.18 percent (reaching \$74.97 billion). Giving to health rose by 5.57 percent (reaching \$14.03 billion). Giving to public/society benefit grew by 11.73 percent (to \$8.38 billion). But giving to human services, the area of philanthropy most directly dedicated to assisting people who are economically disadvantaged, did not share in this growth. In 1996 and 1997, giving to human services rose by a mere 2.51 percent, 1.26 percent per year, and at the end of 1997, the amount given to human services (\$12.66 billion) was still lower than it had been in 1993. Between 1995 and 1997, human services giving, as a proportion of all private giving, fell from 9.44 percent to 8.03 percent.

If there is a lesson to be drawn from this, it is certainly not that weaning the public from “dependence” on government social programs to assist the poor will produce an

outpouring of private voluntary and philanthropic initiative by people who have always been latent givers who used to be discouraged from giving because of the involvement of huge government programs. In 1996 and 1997, a time when a strong economy spurred extraordinary growth in private philanthropy, organizations that are dedicated to assisting people who are poor largely missed out on the giving boom. The rhetoric of politicians seeking to cut welfare, the expression of a belief that poor people are responsible for their own circumstances as expressed through public policy, and the public mood in general all worked against private efforts to assist the poor, even in an ideal environment for growth in other areas of philanthropy.

Giving to Human Services--Trends and Aberrations

It is apparent that the primary factor that determines the health of private philanthropy in America is the state of the economy. In good times, philanthropy increases, as it did throughout the 1960s, and from 1982 to 1989. In bad times, such as the recession years from 1969 to 1976 and 1989 to 1992, private philanthropy suffers. The effects of economic hard times is exaggerated for giving to human services in particular--human services giving declined dramatically not only during the two aforementioned unambiguously bad economic periods, but also during the late 1950s, when amid fair economic growth there was also a mild recession in the middle and at the end of the period.

However, as I have argued, the trend in private philanthropy will veer from the trend in the economy when factors in the public policy or political environment intercede. In particular, in 1980, in an atmosphere in which the economy had been in poor shape for a

number of years, but in which private giving, especially to human services, had been picking up after years of decline, private giving suddenly went on a downswing. In 1980, following three years in which giving to human services had grown, and following a year in which it grew by 7.49 percent, it suddenly fell by 1.67 percent, a record, -9.16 percent swing. While a full-fledged recession was beginning to take place in 1980, the economy had been faltering in the preceding years, yet private giving to human services organizations had been rising in the years leading up to this fall-off. As I have indicated, a change in the political environment may have played a major role in this downturn--the rise of a political movement reflected in a successful presidential candidate's rhetoric gave legitimacy to the idea that the problems of the poor are their own fault.

Private giving veered off the economic trend line again in the election year of 1994, when, despite the ongoing economic recovery, private giving, especially to human services organizations, suddenly fell in the midst of a rhetorical assault on welfare and on the poor. In 1994, total private giving, individual giving, and human services giving all fell off after a year in which private philanthropy appeared to be recovering from the recession of 1991. The drop was particularly stark in the category of human services giving--following a year in which human services giving had risen by 4.59 percent, it dropped by 8.84 percent in 1994, setting a new record with a -13.42 percent swing. This was the first time that private giving to human services dropped in the face of healthy economic statistics. As the economy continued to improve from 1995 through 1997, total private giving began to rise at a record pace, but giving to human services remained stagnant, as a major change in

public policy—the Personal Responsibility Act of 1996, and the political rhetoric that surrounded it—fostered an atmosphere in which people were more likely to blame the poor for their own problems and were thus less likely to feel sympathetic and to contribute or volunteer to help the poor.

While it is impossible to draw definitive conclusions about the relationship between political rhetoric about the poor and private compassion toward the poor, the facts of the 1980 and 1994 political seasons and the aftermath of the Personal Responsibility Act of 1996 suggest several possibilities about this relationship. At the least, the sudden drops in private giving may be a mere coincidence. But this pattern may cast some doubt on the argument that people will fill the void of government welfare provision by stepping up private efforts to assist the poor. The public from which voters are drawn is the same public from which donors to private charities are recruited. The mood of the public toward the poor affects the public's sense of generosity toward the poor, as expressed by both its choice of public policy and its choice of whether to give and which causes merit one's charitable dollars. And that mood is affected by the popular interpretation of the causes of poverty, or to what degree we think of the poor as victims of societal inequities or as people who mainly have themselves to blame for their situations. If we lean toward interpreting poverty as a societal problem, we will lean toward voting for politicians who propose relatively generous government assistance and we will lean toward helping people in poverty ourselves as well. If we lean toward interpreting poverty as the fault of the individual, we will lean toward less

generous government assistance and toward not feeling the responsibility to help the poor ourselves.

A stronger suggestion, which we cannot easily prove, would be that the rhetoric we hear from politicians affects the way we think about the poor, and thus affects how generous we feel toward the poor. Harsher rhetoric, if it persuades a large number of people, will make many of us feel less generous and compassionate. The timing of the rise of "welfare" as a prominent entry on the Gallup respondents' list of most important problems may indicate that the rhetoric of 1994 affected how people felt about the poor. But we cannot know this for a fact.

Private Giving In Good Times--A Comparison

We know that usually, when the economy is in good shape, so is the health of private philanthropy. However, there is still a question of whether, under conditions of relatively equal economic health, an activist or a conservative governmental approach to social welfare will foster greater growth in private philanthropy. Fortunately, in the historical analysis I have presented, there conveniently happen to be two extended periods of strong economic trends in which the United States government was controlled by different political parties with vastly different approaches to social welfare. This provides an opportunity to perform such a comparison.

From 1960 to 1969, the median income increased by 23.8 percent, or 2.64 percent per year. Median family income improved by 37.17 percent, or 4.13 percent per year. The

per capita GNP grew by 37.96 percent, or 4.22 percent per year. The unemployment rate, which stood at 5.5 percent in 1960, gradually declined throughout the decade, reaching 3.5 percent by 1969. By all measures, this was a solid economic decade. Similarly, the period from 1982 to 1989, at least by traditional measures, was an outstanding time for the American economy. The median income rose by 16.87 percent, or 2.41 percent per year. The median family income rose by 12.56 percent, or 1.79 percent per year. The per capita GNP grew by 20.16 percent, or 2.88 percent per year. From a high of 9.7 percent in 1982, the unemployment rate gradually dropped to 5.3 percent by 1989.

In similarly strong economic settings, “crowding out” theorists would predict that years in which there is a conservative governmental approach to welfare, in which government gets out of the way and provides space for the voluntary community to do its best, there would be a much higher level of growth in philanthropy, as there would be an outpouring of people to give to assist people in need. Are they right?

At first glance, the crowding out theory seems to win this argument. While total giving was far stronger in the 1960s, growing at a pace of 6.34 percent per year in the 60's and by only 3.99 percent annually in the 1982–89 period, the more pertinent question is which period saw greater growth in giving to human services charities. In the 1960s, giving to human services increased by an average of 4.38 percent per year, and from 1982 to 1989, this figure grew by 5.47 percent per year.

However, a deeper look yields very different results, especially if we take into account other factors within these two periods--the level of actual need for charity, and the

size of the population of people in age groups that contain potential givers.

Giving in Proportion to Actual Need: The “crowding-out” thesis assumes that government activism in the area of social welfare displaces private initiative to help people in need, which is said to be qualitatively superior. And, “if government welfare disappears, there is no reason to believe that Americans will not respond, as they have in the past, with increased giving.”⁸⁷ It appears, however, that if we account for actual need, people respond more when government is doing more, rather than when government is doing less. Figure 5.2 shows the amount, in real dollars, that was contributed to human services organizations in each year during two prosperous periods—1960–69, and 1982 to 1989, in proportion to the actual number of people recorded as being below the poverty line according to the U.S. Census Bureau. These are two periods which not only shared prosperity, but which differed in terms of the government philosophy toward social welfare.

Figure 5.20. Giving to human services in relation to need, 1960–1976 and 1982–1989.

Year	Private giving to Human Services (Billions of 1997 dollars)	People in Poverty	Private giving per person in poverty (billions of dollars per 1,000 people in poverty)
1960	8.76	39,851	2.20
1961	8.94	39,628	2.26
1962	9.27	38,625	2.40
1963	10.21	36,436	2.80
1964	9.83	36,055	2.73
1965	10.47	33,185	3.16
1966	9.99	28,510	3.50
1967	10.00	27,769	3.60
1968	10.85	25,389	4.27
1969	12.21	24,147	5.06

87 Tanner, p. 147.

1982	10.90	34,398	3.17
1983	11.61	35,303	3.29
1984	12.38	33,700	3.67
1985	12.80	33,064	3.87
1986	13.27	32,370	4.10
1987	14.04	32,221	4.36
1988	14.44	31,745	4.55
1989	15.07	31,528	4.78

Between 1960 and 1969, people increased their effort to help the poor, as expressed by giving to human services, in proportion to the number of people in poverty, by 130 percent. Between 1981 and 1989, people increased their effort by 42.69 percent. By the end of the Great Society period, the American public was more generous to the poor in terms of contributions to private charity (giving \$5.06 hundred million to human services per every 1,000 people below the poverty line) than the public was by the end of the Reagan era of slow growth in government aid to the poor (giving \$4.78 hundred million to human services for every 1,000 below the poverty line).

Giving in Proportion to the Prime Giving Age Population. As a measure of the participation of people in private charity as a manifestation of a vigorous civil society, giving by individuals becomes much more meaningful if we account for the size of the population. Not only do we need to measure individual giving per capita, but we also need to look at the number of people in the age groups which are likely to contain large numbers of givers. According to *Giving and Volunteering in the United States*, the biennial survey conducted by the Gallup organization, "giving as a percentage of household income tends

to increase with age.”⁸⁸ Among all respondents, including non-givers, households in which the respondent was age 18 to 24 averaged contributions of \$261 the previous year, those with respondents age 25–34 averaged \$625, those with respondents age 35–44 averaged \$825, 45–54 averaged \$863, 55–64 averaged \$1,134, those 65–74 averaged \$844, and those with respondents over 75 averaged \$534. Therefore, if the number of people in the prime age groups between 25 and 65 grows, and the amount of popular participation in charity stays the same in terms of real dollars spent on charity, we could say that the amount of popular participation actually declined in comparison with the size of the population of prime potential givers. In other words, in this case, the people who are able to give are giving less than they were before the population changed. So, in order to learn whether the population is really becoming more generous and participating more in charity, we need to account not only for changes in the size of the population, but for the change in the number of people between ages 25 and 65. Figure 5–4 shows the pattern of individual giving in relation to the size of the population, the size of the population over the age of 25, and the size of the population between 25 and 65 years of age for the period from 1960 to 1970 and for the period from 1980 to 1989.

88 Virginia A. Hodgkinson and Murray S. Weitzman, *Giving and Volunteering in the United States: Findings from A National Survey* (Independent Sector: Washington, D.C., 1991), p. 47.

Figure 5.21 Giving in relation to number of givers of prime giving age, 1960–1970, 1980–1989.

	Individual Giving (Billions)	Individual Giving Per Capita	Individual Giving Per Cap, Age 25+	Individual Giving Per Cap, 25–65
1960	50.28	2746	4948	5935
1970	69.21 (+3.76% per year)	3406 (+2.4% per year)	6299 (+2.73% per year)	7707 (+2.99% per year)
1980	87.73	3873	6604	8173
1989	105.09 (+2.2% per year)	4257 (+1.1% per year)	6728 (+.21% per year)	8372 (+.27% per year)

Between 1960 and 1970, the amount of individual charitable giving per capita increased by 24.03 percent, giving per person over 25 grew by 27.30 percent, and giving by people between 25 and 65 years of age increased by 29.86 percent. Between 1980 and 1989, the amount of individual giving per capita grew by 9.91 percent, individual giving by people over 25 rose by 1.88 percent, and giving by people between 25 and 65 rose by 2.43 percent.

The gains in private philanthropy by individuals during the Reagan years of slow growth in social welfare spending are vastly diminished when taking into account the size of the population of prime giving age. Much of the increase in individual giving over the years of prosperity in the 1980s is accounted for by an increase in the percentage of the population between the ages of 25 and 65, the ages when people give most to charity. In 1980, 47.5 percent of the population was in this age group, but this group grew to 50.6 percent of the population by 1989. In the 1960s, the growth in individual giving per capita is greater when accounting for the number of people in this prime giving group because the number of people in this age group shrank in proportion to the size of the overall population:

people age 25 to 65 were 46.3 percent of the population in 1960, and only 44.2 percent in 1970.

In both periods in which there was continued prosperity, private giving grew solidly. At first glance, it seems arguable that giving grew a bit more during the period in which the government was guided by a conservative approach to social welfare provision. But when accounting for need and for population, it becomes apparent that, during the period of more liberal growth in government social welfare, giving grew much more rapidly in relation to actual need, and that the generosity of the populace also grew much more rapidly in relation to the actual number of people available to give. The amount of private giving is mainly related to the state of the economy, particularly to the amount of money people feel they have available to expend. However, when economic times are good, it appears that *giving rises far more slowly in relation to actual need and in relation to the number of possible givers when government social welfare provision is less generous than when it is more generous.*

This should be of special concern to those who wish to count on private charity to compensate for a cutback in government social welfare provision. For it appears, statistically, that the conservative assumption that "without the incentives of today's welfare system there would actually be fewer people requiring assistance"⁸⁹ is wrong. Statistically, the amount of growth in government welfare provision from one year to the next does not have a significant relationship with the poverty rate. But there is a clear relationship

89 Tanner, p. 147.

between the change in government welfare spending from one year to the next and the poverty rate in the following year. When we lag the poverty rate by a year, the level of government spending on welfare has a correlation of $-.579$ with the poverty rate—meaning that when government spends more on social welfare in one year, the poverty rate tends to go down the following year, and when government spends less in one year, the poverty rate tends to go up the next year. So, when government cuts back its welfare provision, we should expect not “fewer people requiring assistance,” but more people requiring assistance.

If needs rise during periods of stingy government social welfare provision, than an outpouring of private initiative to address the problems of poverty is needed. Apparently, however, it would be unwise to count on such an outpouring actually occurring.

Human Services Giving as a Percentage of Total Giving

According to Tanner, the existence of big government social welfare programs leads people to “believe that their contributions are not needed to help the poor,” so they “will contribute instead to the symphony or the Friends of the Earth.” Thus, the portion of private philanthropy that goes to the poor should decline when government provision increases and should increase when government provision declines. “...in the wake of the Great Society, the proportion of philanthropic giving devoted to social welfare declined from 15 percent to six percent....during the Reagan years social welfare giving increased, peaking at 11.6 percent of total giving in 1985. Following the Reagan years, as people again became convinced that government programs would take care of the poor, the proportion of charity dedicated to such purposes again declined, reaching 9.9 percent in 1993.”

Actually, the figures from Giving USA do not support Tanner's version of philanthropic history. In fact, statistically speaking, the percentage of private giving devoted to human services provision is highly statistically correlated with high levels of growth in government social welfare provision. According to my own correlations, based on the Giving USA statistics for the years 1960 through 1997, these variables are positively correlated at the .630 level, at a 2-tailed significance of .005. However, it is more profitable, once again, to look at how the percentage of giving human services has changed over our chronological periods as economic conditions and government philosophy toward social welfare have changed.

Between 1955 and 1960, giving to human services dropped as a percentage of total giving from 21.18 percent to 14.78 percent. In the years from 1960 to 1965, a period of generous government social welfare expenditure growth, giving to human services organizations underwent a remarkable turnaround in actual numbers, but because growth in human services giving was outstripped by even greater growth in total giving, the percentage of giving to human services dropped slightly, to 14.03 percent. The percentage of giving to human services stayed steady during the Great Society period, rising slightly to 14.31 percent by 1970. Between 1970 and 1975, when all giving statistics declined, giving to human services was hurt the most, and the percentage of giving to human services thus dropped to 10.29 percent of all giving. For the next five years, this figure remained fairly constant, dropping slightly to 10.10 percent by 1980. During the economic growth period under Reagan from 1982 to 1989, the percentage of giving that went to human services

cycled upward again, but only modestly, and it never reached its 1970 height. By 1989, 11.58 percent of private giving was dedicated to human services. During the nine years from 1981 through 1989, giving to arts and culture rose from 6.62 percent of all giving to 7.71 percent of all giving, and the percentage of giving to society benefit causes grew from 3.24 percent to 3.9 percent, both proportionally larger increases than in human services in terms of percent increase in percent of all giving.

In the recession of the Bush years, the percentage of private giving accounted for by human services declined again, reaching 10.48 percent by 1992. Then after a slight increase in 1993, the percentage began to decline again, to 8.82 percent by 1997. Interestingly, as with the amount of growth in giving to human services, this was the first period in which economic growth was accompanied by a drop in the percent of giving that went to human services.

Thus, in reality, the choices contributors make seem to have little to do with people becoming more or less dependent on government to take care of social problems. The decline in the percentage of giving to human services during the recession following the Great Society years is similar to the decline that occurred during the recession following the Reagan years. It is difficult, then, to attribute the decline in the wake of the Great Society to people believing that government was taking care of the poor and thus putting their charitable dollars elsewhere, for the same thing happened 20 years later in the wake of Reagan's less generous administration.

What is at play is a simple phenomenon, which is that, in bad economic times, giving

to assist people who are poor suffers more than other categories of giving, and this occurs regardless of whether people perceive the government as being particularly generous or stingy toward the poor.

Explaining the Relationship Between Percentage of Giving to Human Services and the Economy. It is easy to conceive why the level of private philanthropy would rise or fall based on the state of the economy; simply, when people have more to give and feel more confident about the economy, they are more willing to give.

But it is much harder to understand why the composition of private philanthropy would change in the direction it does when the state of the economy changes. Why, when there is a recession, and more people are presumably in economic need, would the percentage of private giving that goes to help people in economic need decline?

To explain this, we need first to examine the composition of the giving population. Although statistics on who gives do not exist prior to 1987, since then the organization Independent Sector has commissioned, and the Gallup Organization has conducted, a biennial survey of giving and volunteering in the United States. While survey data is not always dependable, it is the best information available on the demographics of philanthropy, and the time-series data this survey has produced at least provides a hint as to the answer to our question.

In 1989, at the end of a long period of growth in private philanthropy, 75.1 percent of survey respondents said their household had contributed to some charity in the past year.

The next year the survey was taken, 1991, was a recession year, and only 72.2 percent of respondents reported household contributions. The survey divides its respondents into eight economic categories, the top four categories beginning with household income at \$40,000. In 1989, 87.23 percent of the respondents in the top half reported household contributions, compared with 68.23 percent of the respondents in the bottom half. In 1991, the number in the top half reporting contributions dropped to 86.7, little more than half a percentage point, while the number in the bottom half declined to 64.98 percent, accounting for most of the reduction in contributors. Looking at respondents reporting household incomes over \$50,000, the percentage of contributors hardly dropped at all, going from 88.13 percent in 1989 to 88.03 percent in 1991. In other words, the recession hit the people in the bottom half much harder than it hit the top half, and it thus affected the former's ability to give much more than it did to the top half.⁹⁰

Unfortunately, the survey does not break down what types of causes people contribute to by income. However, as I indicated earlier, it may be safe to presume that people of lower income tend to spend a higher percentage of their philanthropic dollars on helping people in need than do those in higher income groups, who are probably more likely to spend part of their philanthropic budget on institutions that serve people in their economic class--particularly the arts, private educational institutions, and society benefit causes. In fact, during the recession of 1990 and 1991, the percentage of private giving that went to

90. Analysis based on statistics from *Giving and Volunteering in the United States 1988 and 1990 Editions*, Hodgkinson, Virginia A., and Weitzman, Murray S., (Washington, D.C.: Independent Sector).

these three categories of charities increased, while the percentage of giving dedicated to human services shrank, as did the percentage for health and for religious organizations. Similarly, throughout the 1970s, the percentage of giving dedicated to the arts skyrocketed, more than doubling, and the percentage of giving to society benefit causes grew as well.

Those who argue that private charity can compensate for cuts in government welfare programs must deal with this reality, for it is a harbinger of the inability of the private non-profit sector to deal with the fallout of any economic recession that might occur. When the economy goes bad, the area of private charity that is most adversely affected is social welfare. While increasing numbers of people fall into need and the level of resources that social welfare charities have to help these people become increasingly insufficient, the opera house will continue to be thoroughly cleaned every day, and the students at the elite private grade schools will continue to eat hand-rolled ravioli.

Conclusion

While some scholars and politicians have argued that cutbacks in government assistance to people who are in need will lead to an outpouring of private charity, which will be superior in quality and effectiveness in solving the problems of the poor, a historical look at levels of government social welfare provision and levels of private charity casts serious doubt on this belief.

Throughout the past half century, patterns of private charitable giving have generally followed economic patterns. Simply put, when people feel they have money to spare, and

feel secure enough that their economic circumstances will not deteriorate in the near future, they give more often and more generously than when they feel they have little to spare. However, when times are good, the rate of growth in private charitable giving tends to be greater during times of liberal government philosophy toward people in poverty than during times of a conservative government philosophy toward the poor. During the 1960s, when government social welfare provision and public aid provision were growing at exponential rates, private giving, giving by individuals, and giving to human services organizations was rising--in real dollars--at comparable rates to these expressions of individual generosity in the most prosperous years of the Reagan administration. Looking even more closely, the period when government social effort spending was growing the most, the years 1967 to 1970, were the greatest years of growth in private giving to assist people in need.

A statistical account of private giving is more meaningful when we consider giving in light of the number of people available to give--that is, people in age groups that tend to give a substantial amount of money to charity--and when we account for the actual level of need--in terms of the number of people who are in poverty. When we consider these variables, the actual growth in private giving was much more impressive during the years of booming social welfare expenditures of the 1960s than during the years of conservative social welfare policies of the 1980s.

In addition, there are times when patterns of private giving veer away from economic patterns. This occurred during two political seasons in which there was a significant amount of negative rhetoric about welfare and the poor--the political campaigns of 1980 and 1994--

--and when there was a very conservative turn in American social welfare policy--the 1996 Personal Responsibility Act. The first two events coincided with sudden drops in the level of charitable giving, especially giving to the organizations that are dedicated to helping people who are poor. The third event, which should, according to "crowding out" theory, have led to an outpouring of philanthropy to help people in need, did not have this result. Instead, at a time when great economic growth spurred huge increases in nearly every other category of charitable giving, giving to human services to help people in need remained stagnant.

While it is impossible to make conclusions about a causal relationship between government and private generosity, it is possible to say that, empirically at least, these variables tend to move together rather than inversely. This appears logical, since the direction of government policy being chosen at the ballot box and the choices over whether to give and to which causes are being made by people drawn from the same group--the public. It would seem nonsensical that the public would be at the same time in a mood to express greater compassion toward the poor at the ballot box and more selfishness in their private choices, or vice-versa.

It is also possible that government, through its actions, sets an example for the public through its policies, and that it educates the public to the existence and extent of problems when it chooses problems to address. By addressing a given problem, the government sends a loud signal that that problem is a significant one, large and severe enough to merit our attention. And it also sends the message that the problem is a social problem, and not

merely an individual problem that is solely the responsibility of those who are suffering. If people take this cue, and think of the problem as social in nature, they are more likely to believe that they have a responsibility to get involved in addressing the problem themselves if they have the ability to be of help. But when political rhetoric and government policy reflect a belief that people who are poor have arrived at their circumstances by their own fault, and that it is their responsibility, alone, to rise from those circumstances, this communicates a message—or at least helps to legitimize the idea—that the problems of poverty are individual and not social in nature, that the people who are poor are so because they have done something wrong, that these people are in some way morally inferior to the rest of us because they have refused to take responsibility for their own lives, they have been lazy, and a host of other negative attitudes about the poor. And this is likely to foster a mood in which people do not feel that they, as members of society, share in responsibility for these problems. Therefore, they are less likely to step forward on their own to help out. When government steps out of the way, we are not likely to see an outpouring of private charitable initiative to fill the void.

CHAPTER SIX: ACTIVE STATE GOVERNMENTS, ACTIVE COMMUNITIES

If theorists who insist that there is an inverse relationship between “big government” and “big citizenship” are right, then we should expect people to manifest higher levels of generosity and compassion in the form of private philanthropy to help people in need when government does less than when government does more in the area of social welfare. If this is true, then it ought to be possible to prove this relationship statistically by looking at the 50 states. Those states that have the highest public welfare expenditures ought to have the smallest voluntary communities, especially in the area of human services, and vice versa. This chapter will examine what sort of relationship actually exists between these variables in order to learn whether, in fact, when a state provides a relatively small amount of public welfare, people in communities step in to fill the void through private charitable efforts.

The U.S. Census Bureau's *Statistical Analysis of the United States* makes available annual statistics on the expenditures of each state, broken down into several categories of expenditure including “public welfare.” Periodically, a chart is provided on public charities and their finances. Using this highly accessible data makes it quite easy to test the supposed relationship between government welfare and private charity, so it is surprising that those who have posited a “crowding-out” thesis have not tried to prove it using this data.

Revealing Data

For our purposes, there are several very telling statistics: the amount of government spending on public welfare per capita in each state, the amount of government spending on public welfare per capita in relation to the number of people below the poverty line, the number of charities per capita that exist in each state, the number of charities that exist in relation to the number of people below the poverty line, and the number of charities dedicated specifically to “Human Services” both in relation to the size of the population and to the number of people below the poverty line.

Running statistical correlations to examine the relationship between the amount of state government spending on public welfare per capita and the number of charities and the level of assets of the charitable community across the states yields some interesting results:⁹¹

- The amount of a state government's expenditures on public welfare per capita is positively correlated with the number of charities per capita in the state—a .363 correlation with a two-tailed significance of .009.

91 All data in this chapter is based on statistical information from the Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1999, except for figures on charities, from Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1998 (U.S. Bureau of the Census web site). For the purpose of comparison with statistics on the number and assets of charities, which was only available for the year 1992, 1990 census figures are used for population and poverty, and 1992 statistics are used in the calculation of public expenditures and economic conditions.

Because this data is based on the U.S. Internal Revenue Service Exempt Organizations/Business Master File and Return Transaction File, it does not include organizations not required to report to the IRS, it excludes religious congregations and organizations with less than \$25,000 in gross receipts. However, it does include contributions to religious-affiliated charities, such as Catholic Charities, that are required to report.

- The amount of per capita government expenditures on public welfare is positively correlated with the total assets of the charitable sector in a state—a .426 correlation with a two-tailed significance of .002.⁹²

These correlations would seem to suggest that the opposite of what the “crowding out” theorists suppose is true—the more active government is in helping the poor, the more people do on their own, private initiative to get involved in their communities.

However, these figures do not take into account the actual level of need within a state. Just because a state spends more per capita on welfare does not mean that that state is more generous, or provides more adequate relief to people in need, than a state that spends less on welfare. What really matters is the proportion of public relief to the number of people in need within a state. If we know this, then we can answer not only the simple question of whether more government spending on welfare means less private charity, but also the question of whether more or fewer private charities will be formed in response to the level of adequacy of public provision within a state. In other words, when government provision is less adequate in relation to actual need, will people be more likely to step in and fill the void through private charity, and when government provision is more adequate, will people become less involved and depend on government to deal with the problems of poverty on its own?

We can take a step toward answering this question by creating a new measurement—

92 A correlation is considered statistically significant with a two-tailed significance of .05 or less.

the amount of money spent in a state on public welfare in proportion to the number of people below the poverty line. This figure can be arrived at by multiplying the poverty rate in a state by the total population (the actual number of officially poor people) and dividing that number by the total dollars spent by that state's government on public welfare. How states perform in terms of meeting the actual level of need differs greatly from the simple amount of government spending on welfare per capita. For example, West Virginia, which is ninth among the states in per capita spending on public welfare, drops to 31st when taking into account the state's 17.8 percent poverty rate, while Virginia jumps from 50th to 24th well ahead of its neighbor, when taking into account Virginia's 8.8 percent poverty rate. By comparing the government's level of generosity in relation to actual need with the per capita number of charities that exist in a state, we can see the relationship between the level of the adequacy of a state government's response to poverty with the number of charities, and learn whether more charities arise when government welfare is more adequate or when it is less adequate. It is also important to see whether the level of government generosity correlates with the amount of giving to organizations dedicated to human services in particular.

Using the amount of spending on welfare in a state per person under the poverty line, instead of per capita spending on public welfare, yields even more robust correlation with our measures of private charity than in the previous set of correlations:

- The amount of government spending on public welfare per person under the poverty line has a very high positive correlation with the per capita number of charities in a state—.484 at a significance level of .000.

- Government spending on welfare per person in poverty also correlates positively with the number of human services charities per capita in a state—.384 at a significance level of .006.
- There is an even stronger relationship between government spending on welfare per person in poverty and the assets of charities in a state per person in poverty in a state—a .808 correlation at a significance level of .000.

It is interesting to rank the states from 1 to 50 according to their level of government welfare per poor person and the number of charities per capita (see Figure 5.1) The state ranking in welfare spending per person in poverty is correlated with the state's ranking in number of charities per capita at .553, (sig. of .000), and with the number of human services charities at .471 (sig. .001).

We can take this analysis a step further: how does a government's level of response to actual need compare with the community's private response to actual need? We can examine this by changing our measure of the level of private charity. Instead of charities per capita, we can look at the total number of charities and the number of human services charities in proportion to the number of people below the poverty line. When measuring private charity in this manner, it bears an even closer relationship with the level of adequacy of government welfare provision:

- The amount of government welfare spending per person in poverty in a state correlates extremely highly with the number of charities per poor person in a state—

.810, sig. .000)

- Government welfare spending per person in poverty also correlates closely with the number of human services charities in a state (.744, sig. .000).

FIGURE 6-1. State rankings on measures of public aid and private charity

State	Rank in government expenditure on public welfare per person under poverty line (welfpov)	Rank in number of charities per 10,000 people (charperc ap)	Rank in charities per 1,000 people below poverty line (charperp oor)	Rank in human services charities per 10,000 people (hschper cap)	Rank in human services charities per 1,000 people below poverty line (hschperp oor)	Rank in personal income per capita (incpercap)	Rank in charitable assets per capita (Charaspc)	Rank in charitable assets per 1,000 below poverty line (Charasperp oor)
Alabama	48 (2,404)	46 (3.95)	46 (1.90)	47. (1.49)	48 (.72)	40 (16,374)	44 (11.92)	48 (5,740)
Alaska	4 (8,995)	1 (11.40)	6 (9.97)	3. (4.47)	7. (3.92)	20. (22,681)	46 (10)	41 (8,772)
Arizona	28 (4,300)	37 (5.05)	35 (3.68)	41 (1.76)	39 (1.28)	35 (20,461)	42 (12.52)	38 (9,138)
Arkansas	47 (2,847)	40 (4.80)	47 (2.43)	32 (2.11)	44 (1.08)	46 (18,053)	45 (11.82)	46 (6,029)
California	15 (6,062)	28 (5.99)	30 (4.31)	31 (2.14)	33 (1.54)	12 (24,404)	28 (18.82)	29 (13,536)
Colorado	31 (4,071)	12 (7.89)	23 (5.76)	17 (2.84)	24 (2.07)	9 (25,428)	30 (18.34)	30 (13,388)
Connecticut	1 (14,076)	10 (8.24)	1 (13.73)	15 (2.89)	17 (4.82)	1 (33,361)	2 (41.04)	1 (68,396)
Delaware	9 (6,942)	11 (8.08)	4 (11.71)	6 (3.42)	2 (4.96)	6 (26,454)	11 (20.34)	5 (43,565)
Florida	42 (3,293)	44 (4.33)	40 (3.01)	46 (1.57)	43 (1.09)	19 (22,939)	32 (17.42)	33 (12,096)
Georgia	38 (3,599)	43 (4.40)	44 (2.79)	48 (1.47)	47 (.93)	23 (22,201)	31 (18.17)	35 (11,502)
Hawaii	19 (5,341)	20 (6.64)	20 (6.04)	36 (1.97)	27 (1.79)	17 (23,192)	25 (20.34)	25 (18,494)
Idaho	46 (2,853)	35 (5.14)	36 (3.45)	26 (2.32)	32 (1.56)	43 (18,705)	48 (8.86)	47 (5,952)
Illinois	26 (4,382)	32 (5.50)	33 (4.02)	39 (1.88)	35 (1.37)	8 (25,619)	12 (27.76)	20 (13,686)
Indiana	23 (4,704)	31 (5.56)	31 (4.28)	23 (2.45)	26 (1.89)	29 (21,490)	20 (24.69)	23 (18,989)
Iowa	21 (5,242)	21 (6.59)	17 (6.34)	16 (2.86)	14 (2.75)	32 (21,229)	24 (20.41)	21 (19,629)
Kansas	33 (3,847)	25 (6.42)	19 (6.23)	21 (2.62)	16 (2.54)	24 (22,166)	38 (14.33)	28 (13,913)
Kentucky	32 (4,021)	41 (4.66)	45 (2.69)	35 (1.98)	41 (1.14)	39 (19,083)	35 (15.60)	39 (9,016)
Louisiana	45 (3,106)	48 (3.71)	49 (1.57)	43 (1.61)	49 (.68)	41 (18,941)	37 (15.33)	44 (6,494)
Maine	10 (6,881)	6 (8.98)	12 (6.86)	12 (2.99)	20 (2.28)	36 (20,366)	18 (25.23)	22 (19,258)

Maryland	16 (5,666)	23 (6.56)	14 (6.62)	28 (2.26)	19 (2.28)	5 (26,569)	3 (38.34)	6 (38,730)
Massachusetts	6 (8,428)	5 (9.02)	7 (8.43)	8 (3.16)	10 (2.95)	3 (29,101)	1 (68.57)	2 (64,081)
Michigan	25 (4,658)	39 (4.87)	37 (3.41)	37 (1.95)	36 (1.36)	18 (22,943)	29 (18.41)	31 (12,876)
Minnesota	14 (6,206)	13 (7.88)	16 (6.57)	10 (3.13)	15 (2.61)	11 (24,410)	14 (27.27)	16 (22,724)
Mississippi	50 (2,038)	49 (3.38)	50 (1.31)	49 (1.27)	50 (1.50)	50 (16,822)	47 (9.40)	50 (3,675)
Missouri	37 (3,640)	29 (5.87)	28 (4.44)	27 (2.29)	28 (1.71)	26 (21,674)	10 (31.53)	14 (23,806)
Montana	44 (3,117)	3 (9.79)	21 (6.00)	4 (4.14)	17 (2.54)	47 (17,899)	26 (19.37)	34 (11,886)
Nebraska	22 (4,965)	16 (7.03)	13 (6.83)	14 (2.96)	12 (2.87)	27 (21,965)	15 (25.70)	10 (24,949)
Nevada	27 (4,355)	47 (3.87)	34 (3.95)	43 (1.61)	30 (1.64)	14 (24,135)	49 (7.30)	43 (7,454)
New Hampshire	2 (13,154)	9 (8.39)	2 (13.33)	7 (3.39)	1 (5.38)	7 (25,752)	5 (37.94)	3 (60,214)
New Jersey	7 (8,053)	33 (5.19)	25 (5.65)	38 (1.92)	23 (5.38)	2 (30,113)	21 (22.47)	12 (24,425)
New Mexico	49 (2,394)	19 (6.65)	39 (3.18)	19 (2.69)	38 (1.29)	48 (17,689)	43 (11.91)	49 (5,697)
New York	5 (8,542)	17 (6.88)	27 (4.81)	29 (2.25)	31 (1.57)	4 (28,158)	7 (35.53)	11 (24,847)
North Carolina	35 (3,709)	30 (5.68)	29 (4.37)	30 (2.18)	29 (1.68)	31 (21,327)	13 (27.64)	18 (21,263)
North Dakota	24 (4,695)	4 (9.06)	15 (6.61)	5 (3.80)	13 (2.77)	38 (19,232)	16 (25.37)	24 (18,519)
Ohio	18 (5,628)	27 (6.05)	26 (5.26)	22 (2.47)	21 (2.15)	21 (22,302)	19 (24.73)	17 (21,503)
Oklahoma	43 (3,209)	34 (5.17)	38 (3.31)	34 (2.00)	40 (1.28)	44 (18,697)	36 (15.51)	36 (9,945)
Oregon	17 (5,630)	15 (7.43)	8 (8.08)	11 (3.11)	8 (3.38)	26 (21,975)	40 (13.07)	27 (14,208)
Pennsylvania	11 (6,854)	24 (6.52)	22 (5.93)	25 (2.34)	22 (2.13)	16 (23,773)	9 (34.52)	8 (31,385)
Rhode Island	3 (11,778)	14 (7.88)	5 (10.44)	13 (2.97)	6 (3.96)	15 (23,777)	6 (36.76)	4 (49,012)
South Carolina	36 (3,655)	45 (4.21)	46 (2.60)	42 (1.64)	45 (1.01)	42 (18,908)	41 (13.50)	42 (8,331)
South Dakota	40 (3,446)	8 (8.42)	18 (6.33)	8 (3.16)	18 (2.38)	37 (19,622)	4 (38.07)	9 (28,628)
Tennessee	34 (3,728)	38 (4.90)	41 (2.90)	40 (1.84)	42 (1.09)	33 (20,904)	23 (20.86)	32 (12,343)
Texas	41 (3,326)	42 (4.48)	43 (2.82)	45 (1.60)	46 (1.01)	25 (22,145)	34 (15.75)	37 (9,908)
Utah	20 (5,252)	50 (3.35)	32 (4.09)	50 (1.26)	34 (1.54)	45 (18,650)	39 (13.99)	26 (17,065)
Vermont	12 (6,600)	1 (13.27)	3 (12.17)	2 (4.53)	5 (4.16)	30 (21,451)	8 (35.24)	7 (32,314)
Virginia	39 (3,565)	26 (6.32)	24 (5.70)	32 (2.11)	25 (1.90)	13 (24,299)	17 (25.31)	15 (22,806)

Washing ton	8 (7,424)	18 (6.70)	10 (7.53)	20 (2.65)	9 (2.98)	10 (24,810)	22 (21.39)	13 (24,030)
West Virginia	29 (4,295)	36 (5.13)	42 (2.83)	24 (2.38)	37 (1.31)	49 (17,180)	33 (16.22)	40 (8,964)
Wisconsin	13 (6,598)	22 (6.57)	11 (7.07)	18 (2.72)	11 (2.93)	22 (22,253)	27 (19.08)	19 (20,512)
Wyoming	30 (4,225)	7 (8.88)	9 (7.92)	1 (4.65)	4 (4.23)	34 (20,556)	50 (6.76)	45 (6,147)

Permutations of the Relationship between Government Welfare and Private Charity

Thus, there is a strong tendency for states that have a greater government effort to address poverty to have larger charitable sectors than states where there is a less adequate government response to poverty. But there are two important nuances which, when accounted for, appear to make the relationship between “big government” and “big citizenship” even starker.

The Population Density Effect. In figure 6.1 we can see that there is a tendency for the states' rankings in the amount of public welfare per person in poverty to fall fairly closely to the states' rankings in the number of charities per capita and the number of charities per person in poverty. However, there are numerous exceptions to this tendency. The discrepancies can be explained by an intervening variable--the population density of a state. States in which the population density is particularly low--meaning that a relatively small population is spread out over a very large geographical area--tend to have very large numbers of private charities in proportion to the number of people in the state. This seems quite logical, since serving a population that is geographically spread out requires a larger number of charities than it would take to serve a population that is concentrated in a smaller

geographical area.

The states that have low population density tend to be among the less generous (but not the least generous) in terms of the proportion of public welfare provision to the number of people in poverty, yet among the highest in the number of private charities. These aberrational states thus dampen the relationships we have elaborated between government welfare and private charity. Looking at the state rankings for amount of public welfare per person in poverty and number of charities per person in charity in Figure 5.1, we can observe that, excluding the 13 most sparsely populated states, 31 of the remaining 37 states fall within 10 spaces in the two categories. When excluding the states with less than 35 residents per square mile (the 14 most sparsely populated states), we get the following correlations:

- There is a .638 correlation between public welfare per person in poverty and the number of charities per capita, up from .484 when including the lowest population density states;
- The amount of welfare per person in poverty and the number of charities per person in poverty correlate at .860 (sig. .000), up from .810;
- The amount of welfare per person in poverty and the number of charities per capita dedicated to human services correlate at .631 (sig. .000), up from .384;
- The amount of welfare per person in poverty and the number of charities per person in poverty dedicated to human services correlate at .839 (sig. .000), up from .744.

Note that, in the correlations presented earlier in this chapter, the relationship between public welfare expenditures in a state and assets of the charitable sector in a state was much stronger than the correlations using number of charities. When accounting for population density, the relationships between public welfare expenditures and number of charities rise to the level of the relationships in which assets of charities was the dependent variable. The reason for this, as can be seen in Figure 6.1, is that when we use assets instead of numbers of charities as the dependent variable, the population density effect is not much of a factor. For example, in Montana, Wyoming, North Dakota, New Mexico, and Colorado, the state's ranking in amount of charitable assets falls much closer to the ranking in government welfare expenditures than does the ranking on number of charities. This should be expected, for the reason these states have larger numbers of charities per capita is that more charities are needed to serve a population that is more spread out, but more charitable assets are not needed because the same number of people is being served. There are more charities per capita, but the charities are smaller on average.

Although charitable assets correlate more closely with government welfare expenditures than does number of charities, I am focusing more on the number of charities because statistics from the U.S. Census Bureau break down the number of charities into categories of uses, while they do not break down charitable assets into such categories. Using number of charities allows us to see how government activism relates to private activism specifically in the area most pertinent to this study—human services.

The Regional Effect. Looking closely at Figure 6.1, it seems fairly obvious that the generosity of welfare provided by a state, the number of charities per capita, and the number of charities per poor person is closely related to region. In the rankings on all three of these variables, all six New England states are in the top 14. All of the non-border states of the South are in the bottom half. In order to check the extent to which one can predict a state's performance on these variables by its region, I calculated the statistics by region, using the U.S. Census Bureau's division of the country into nine regions as a guide. Figure 6.2 shows the results of this effort.

Figure 6.2. Regional rankings on measures of public aid, private charity, and income.

Region	Gov Welfare Per poor person-- Number (avg. rank)	Charities per capita Number (avg. rank)	Charities per poor-- Number (avg. rank)	Human Services charities per cap/ Per poor-- (avg. rank)	Per capita Income-- avg rank
New England (CT, ME, Mass., NH, RI, VT)	10,153 (5.7)	9.30 (7.5)	10.83 (5)	9.5/7.5	15.3
Middle Atlantic (DE, NJ, NY, PA)	7,598 (8)	6.67 (21.25)	7.03 (19.5)	24.5/19.5	7
Eastern North Central (IL, IN, MI, OH, WI)	5,195 (21)	5.71 (30.2)	4.01 (27.6)	27.8/25.8	19.6
South Atlantic (FL, GA, MD, NC, SC, VA, WV)	3,939 (33.6)	5.01 (35.29)	3.85 (34.14)	35.71/35	26
West South Central (AS, LA, OK, TX)	3,122 (44)	4.47 (41)	2.53 (44.25)	38.5/44.75	39
East South Central (AL, KY, MS, TN)	3,048 (41)	4.33 (43.5)	2.20 (45.5)	42.75/45.25	40.5

Regions with Low Population Density States

Pacific (Ca, OR, WA)	6,372 (13.3)	6.71 (20.33)	6.64 (16)	20/17.33	16
West North Central (IA, KS, MN, MO, NB, ND, SD)	4,734 (25.7)	6.88 (16.6)	6.49 (16.3)	11.14/15	28.16
Mountain (AZ, CO, ID, MT NV, NM, UT, WY)	3,821 (34.38)	5.81 (26.25)	4.75 (28.63)	22.75/25.38	34.38

It is very clear that one can predict, based on the region a state is in, approximately where that state will rank in terms of the first three variables on this chart. The six regions without low population density states rank in nearly the same order on every variable. Although the regions with the low-population density states have higher numbers on the charity variables in relation with the government welfare variable, they fall in order in all three variables.

But are these relationships merely an artifact of vastly different economic conditions among the regions? In order to examine this question, I included a fourth variable--the average per capita income of each region. It does appear that there is a fairly close match between per capita income and all the other variables. In other words, it is possible that how much a state government spends on social welfare in relation to other states is merely a function of the availability of financial resources, as is the ability of individuals to fund charities. The relationship between the welfare statistic and the charity statistics may simply be the result of the impact of the economy on both.

Looking again at Figure 6.1, we can examine the relationship in ranking among

states for public welfare per person in poverty, charities per capita, charities per person in poverty, and per capita income. The states' rankings in per capita income do appear rather close to their rankings on the other variables. Indeed, there is a .713 correlation between per capita income and welfare per poor person, and a .567 correlation between per capita income and charities per poor person, although there is no relationship between per capita income and charities per capita.

However, when running a regression with charities per capita as the dependent variable and income per capita and amount of welfare per poor person as the independent variables, there is no relationship between per capita income and charities per capita, and the correlation between welfare spending per poor person and charities per capita is .596, at a significance of .006. Similarly, when changing the dependent variable to charities per poor person, per capita income has no effect on the relationship between welfare per poor person and charities per poor person, which retains a .825 correlation at a significance level of .000.

The poverty rate is also a factor that should be considered. The poverty rate correlates negatively with both the level of welfare and the level of charity in a state: $-.691$ with welfare per poor person, $-.443$ with charities per capita, and $-.773$ with charities per poor person. However, running a regression to see how poverty rate and the level of welfare per person in poverty affects both measures of charity shows that the amount of spending on welfare has a much closer relationship with the level of charity than does the poverty rate. Including the poverty rate as a variable reduces the correlation between charities per capita and welfare per poor person to .442, and reduces the correlation between charities per poor

person and welfare per poor person to .341.

In other words, although a state's economic characteristics affects both the level of public welfare it provides and the number of private charities, the relationship between private charity and public welfare remains strong even when accounting for economic factors. For example, if a state is relatively low in per capita income and high in public welfare provision, we can predict that the state's ranking in number of charities per capita will fall much closer to its high ranking in amount of public welfare than to its low ranking in per capita income. And one can fairly well predict how generous a state is in terms of public welfare provision from the number of charities per capita in the state, regardless of the state's economic circumstances.

Interpreting the Statistical Relationship between Welfare and Charity in the States.

While economic factors are certainly somewhat determinative of both the relative levels of government welfare provision and private charity among the states, it appears that economics does not explain, at least in statistical terms, why welfare and charity seem to move in the same direction. The reason is that, while there appears to be a close relationship between personal income and poverty and the number of charities and amount of public welfare in a state, there is much more variation around the mean on the economic statistics. For example, if one measures the average distance in ranking of states between the variable of welfare per poor person and the variable of charities per poor person, we find that, on average, states rank 7.8 spaces apart on these variables (6.6 spaces apart when excluding the

14 lowest population density states). But comparing income per capita and charities per poor person, there is an average distance of 11.24 spaces (9.97 spaces apart when excluding the 14 lowest population density states). The larger distance on the latter comparison is caused by more numerous states which have extraordinary distances between per capita income and the number of charities per poor person.

The regional effect appears to be dominant in determining the level of both public welfare and private charity in a state. Within regions, the states tend to cling near a regional norm of welfare provision and level of private charity regardless of the states' average personal income. For example, in New England, all six states are in the top six in the generosity of government welfare in relation to the number of poor people. All six states are within the top 14 on charities per capita and the top 12 on charities per person in poverty, even though these states range from first to 36th in per capita income. Six of the seven South Atlantic states fall between 39st and 42nd on public welfare per person in poverty, and five of those six states also fall between 30th and 45th in charities per capita and 29th and 46th on charities per person in poverty. The two exceptions in the South Atlantic are what we might call "border states"—Maryland and Virginia—which may not share certain characteristics with other states in the region. As another example, the four states in the West South Central region all fall between 41st and 47th on welfare per poor person, 34th and 48th on charities per capita, and 38th and 47th on charities per poor person.

Within regions, the states also tend to be similar to each other in economic statistics, including per capita income. However, there are numerous exceptions. For example, in the

high income New England states, Vermont is 30th and Maine is 36nd in per capita income. In the South Atlantic states, Florida is 19th in per capita income and Georgia is 23rd, far above the other states in the region. Similarly, in the West South Central region, Texas is 25th, far above the other states in its region.

But even when a state is distant from other states in its region in terms of per capita income, it tends to cling near the other states in the region in terms of the level of public welfare and private charity. Florida, 19th in per capita income, is 42nd in welfare per person in poverty, 44th in charities per capita, and 40th in charities per person in poverty. While 23rd in per capita income, Georgia is 38th in welfare per poor person, 43rd in charities per capita, and 44th in charities per poor person. Texas is 25th in per capita income, but 41st in welfare per poor person, 42nd in charities per capita, and 43rd in charities per poor person. Despite being 36th in income per capita, Maine falls within its region's norms in terms of welfare and charity: 10th in welfare per person in poverty, 6th in charities per capita, and 12th in charities per poor person. Despite being 30th in per capita income, Vermont is 12th in welfare per poor person, 1st in charities per capita, and 3rd in charities per poor person.

The states that tend to fall outside their regional norms in welfare per poor person, charities per capita, and charities per poor person are mainly ones that have characteristics other than economic ones that help to explain why they do not conform to those norms. Several are geographical outliers. In the South Atlantic Region, for example, Maryland and Virginia are in part suburbs of the nation's capital, and attract a wide range of residents from all over the country. Excluding these two states, the remaining five states in the region share

strikingly similar characteristics in the generosity of public welfare and of private charity, regardless of income:

SOUTH ATLANTIC STATES

	Per Capita Income	Welfare Per Person in Poverty	Charities per Capita	Charities per person In Poverty
FLA	19th	42nd	44th	40th
GA	23	38	43	44
NC	31	35	30	29
SC	42	36	45	46
W.VA	49	29	36	42
"Border States"				
MD	5	16	23	14
VA	13	39	26	24

Similar results accrue if we remove Wisconsin, a geographical outlier, from the East North Central Region:

	Per Capita Income	Welfare person in Poverty	Charities per capita	Charities per person In poverty
ILL	8	26	32	33
MI	18	25	39	37
OH	21	18	27	26
IN	29	23	31	31
"Geographical outlier"				
WI	22	13	22	11

Removing the border state Kentucky from its region, and removing Minnesota from its region, have similar effects on their regional statistics. The fact that geographical outliers

dampen the impact of region on levels of welfare and charity makes it even clearer that these variables are often functions of regional characteristics.

Thus, it is evident that the level of public welfare and private charity in a state tend to depend largely on the region in which the state is located. And, while a "crowding-out" theorist might expect to find that states with high levels of charity have low levels of welfare and vice versa, the opposite tends to be true--the more public welfare in a state in relation to need, the more charity exists in relation to need and to population. Where a strong tradition of public welfare has developed, so has a strong tradition of private charity, and where a tradition of stingy public welfare provision has developed, there is relatively little private charity available to help fill the void left by insufficient government provision.

Aberrational States

Many of the exceptions to the tendency of states to cling close to regional norms in both welfare and charity statistics are the results of the peculiarities of the individual states. Some of these states exhibit factors that should logically dampen the level of community identification within a state, and thus have a negative effect on the level of civil society within the state. One such variable is rapid population growth. States that have been growing most rapidly within a region tend to fall below their regional norms in terms of welfare and charity. While there is no statistical correlation between population growth and the other variables we are considering, looking at individual states that have seen extraordinary population growth shows an effect. For example, Nevada is a striking exception to the tendency of low population density states to rank highly in the extent of the

charitable community. The population of Nevada grew by over 50 percent between 1980 and 1990. While the state ranked 12th in per capita income in 1990, it ranked 27th in welfare per person in poverty, 47th in charities per capita, and 34th in charities per person in poverty. Similarly, Arizona, which grew in population by nearly 35 percent, was 28th in welfare per poor person, 37th in charities per capita, and 35th in charities per poor person. California, which saw over 25 percent population growth, lags behind the other Pacific Coast states in charities per capita (28th) and charities per poor person (30th). The fastest growing states tend to be civil society laggards despite tending to be high-income states, the logical explanation being that there is a large proportion of new people who are less connected to their communities than are long-time residents. The new residents are less willing to pay high taxes to help poor people in their adopted state, and they are less likely to be involved in charity, both because they do not yet identify strongly with their communities and states.

New Jersey provides another example of how factors that may affect the level of civil society may dampen private charity. Despite being 7th in the nation in welfare per poor person, characteristic for its region (in which all of the four states are in the top 11), New Jersey is 33rd in charities per capita, falling far below its regional norm (the other three states are between 11th and 24th, and each of these states falls within 10 rankings on welfare per poor person and charities per capita). One must suspect that the low level of charities relative to population in New Jersey has something to do with the state's status as a commuter state—many of the people there work in New York City, and some in Philadelphia. Many of these commuters are young people who have moved to New Jersey

from other parts of the country, and it is quite possible that many of them see themselves more as New Yorkers living on the outskirts than as New Jerseyites. This might lead the observer to believe that the low level of charity is a function of many residents' lack of, or shallow level of, identification with their home state, which may dramatically affect their level of community involvement.

Another particularly interesting state is Utah. Why does Utah, despite being the 6th poorest state in the nation in terms of per capita income and falling last in number of charities per capita, rank 20th in provision of welfare in relation to the number of people below the poverty line? Utah vastly bucks the tendency of states in its region to fall somewhat below average in provision of welfare in relation to need and to rank very highly in terms of the amount of charities per capita and per number of poor people. Utah is 70 percent Mormon, a relatively tightly knit and highly concentrated religious sect. It is quite possible that in Utah, there is a willingness to use tax dollars to fund welfare because its recipients are religiously and ethnically similar to the taxpayers--there is no sense that "we" are paying to support "them." Utahans may also be much more charitable than these statistics give them credit for, since these statistics do not include most contributions to religious organizations, which are not required to report to the Internal Revenue Service. But, regardless of the truth about the level of charity in Utah, the fact that Utahans choose to pay a significant amount of their income in taxes that go to assist those who are poor is interesting. The dynamics of paying taxes may be quite similar in certain respects to the practice of tithing that is required by the Mormon church of all its members.

Differing Ideological Histories: Northeast vs. South

Statistically, the levels of public welfare and private charity tend to be very closely related, and whether there is a high or low level of these variables in a state depends to a large extent on the region where the state is located. While we might expect both private giving and government spending to be mainly connected to the availability of economic resources within a state, the effect of economic statistics such as per capita personal income and the poverty rate in a state have little effect on the relationship between government welfare spending and the size of the charitable community. Even states that differ substantially from surrounding states in terms of their economic status tend to cling to their regional norms on welfare and charity. Thus, we should suspect that different trends on welfare and charity among the regions of the country are the result of different regional cultures that have resulted from the unique history of each region and which affect both of these variables in the same manner.

Why, then, do some regions develop more welfare and more charity relative to population and need than do others? And why are high-welfare regions also high-charity regions? A complete answer to these questions would require a detailed historical analysis of the welfare and charity in each portion of the country, which would be a serious departure for this study. However, it is worthwhile to take a brief look at the historical differences between two regions to see if we can detect possible reasons for these phenomena. The most easily accessible areas in terms of documentation of the history of welfare and charity are the Northeast and the South, two regions which have followed disparate trajectories on these

variables.

The historical trajectory of the South was, of course, set by 250 years of slavery. Up to the Civil War, "to speak of workers in the South was to speak largely of slaves and, therefore, to speak of no public social welfare programs." There were poor whites who "were landless or owned the most worthless worn-out land," but who "were not directly subject to the economic fluctuations created by the mechanization of agriculture."⁹³ Without a dominant wage labor system, there was little need to build a public welfare system to sustain displaced workers who might be needed again in an expanding labor market--most of the people needed for labor were owned. The states maintained very modest public welfare institutions. At the same time, Southern elites were largely hostile to private charity. For example, "By the early decades of the nineteenth century, Virginia had adopted statutes requiring that all property given to charitable purposes be given over to public local poor relief managers, refused to charter new voluntary institutions, and reduced donor prerogatives."⁹⁴ Presumably, the potential meddling of do-gooders who might raise a call for reform was not welcome in the South. The lack of an extensive prewar public or private welfare system to draw upon had serious consequences for the South in the aftermath of the Civil War, with the inability to meet the needs created by widespread destruction, huge numbers of wounded veterans, and the widows and orphans of those who had been killed. A great deal of the responsibility for assisting the destitute and helpless--both white and

93 June Axinn and Herman Levin, *Social Welfare; A History of American Response to Need* (New York; Longman, 1992), p. 38.

94 Wolch, p. 49.

black--was taken over by the Federal government through the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands.

Thus, the South never developed for itself the type of extensive systems of welfare and charity that came to exist in the Northeast. At the end of Reconstruction, the South continued to rely on a basically feudal system, its "black codes" designed to keep a large part of the poor population in essentially slavery like circumstances. "The codes limited property rights, forbade working as artisans and mechanics, and otherwise specified the kinds of economic activities in which freed blacks could engage." In Georgia, laws allowed for persons strolling about in idleness to be put in chain gangs and contracted out to employers. Vagrants were rounded up and leased out to employers. Orphaned children were apprenticed, often to former masters. "Thus, a solution to black dependency and a means for building a slavlike labor force went hand-in-hand."⁹⁵

Toward the end of the 19th Century, the Southern power structure ensured that poor people would remain voiceless by creating voting laws that disenfranchised a huge proportion of the population--both black and white. Isolated from each other in an agricultural economy and without voting rights, the poor had little means to push for public welfare measures.

As Piven and Cloward have demonstrated, under the old caste system, elites in the south continued into the 20th Century to be resistant to welfare programs that "would

95 Axinn and Levin, p. 88.

undermine the low wage structure in the South” and that would “open the rolls to blacks and undermine the caste economy of the South.”⁹⁶ In the 1930s, Southern congressmen ensured that the new public relief measures would allow wide discretion to the states in approving relief, “thus allowing the states to discriminate against blacks,” and in setting very low grant levels.⁹⁷

The political economy of the South allowed its elites to largely ignore the needs of its poor, and thus there was relatively little need to develop large public welfare systems or a high level of private charity. But the Northeast followed a wholly different trajectory because of the complexities of controlling a huge and exponentially growing class of free wage laborers.

For one matter, while the Southern caste system meant that everyone had a predetermined place in society, free labor in the North meant that there would be huge numbers of people periodically displaced from employment in the series of violent upswings and downswings of the market economy throughout the 19th Century, and that these people had the potential to cause turmoil. They not only had the potential to cause turmoil, but political upheaval as well; already by the 1820s, masses of workers were concentrated in urban factories and were beginning to form labor unions, and “urbanization was bringing large numbers of people together for effective, collective action, demands for the vote were

96 Frances Fox Piven & Richard A. Cloward, *Regulating the Poor* (New York: Random House, 1971) p. 115.

97 Piven and Cloward, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

heard,"⁹⁸ and most states had universal male suffrage by the 1820s. For elites, millions of free laborers concentrated in urban areas constituted "dangerous classes," particularly during the continual recurrence of economic depressions. Rapid industrialization and urbanization, as well as the complexities of maintaining a labor force through different economic cycles forced elites in the North to deal far more directly with the needs of people who could not support themselves, unlike in the South.

Waves of immigration of people of differing ethnic and religious backgrounds, and intense competition in urban politics, also combined to create a series of forces for growing public relief and private charity. Immigrants represented potential new voters, and gave urban politicians incentive to provide relief in order to gain their loyalty. In addition, the Catholic Church and other important ethnic and religious institutions had a responsibility to provide aid to their own. And the existence of Protestant charities which proselytized, and therefore presented the threat of converting Catholics, led to competition, as the Catholic Church built its own charities to protect against the intrusions of the Protestants. For these and other reasons, all owing to the dynamism of a free labor force, rapid population growth, ethnic diversity, and political competition, the way the Northeast dealt with its poor followed a wholly different trajectory from the South.

Unlike the South, the Northeast had to deal with the issue of social welfare, and it did so with both public relief and private charity. Of course, in the 19th Century, social welfare in the North was rather barbaric; as Katz points out, the poor were often auctioned

98 Axinn and Levin, p. 40

to the lowest bidder, or placed in a town-owned asylum. Outdoor relief was often limited to those who had family or friends with whom they could stay. The major way to take care of the poor was indoor relief in poorhouses which were often designed to instill strict discipline in their able-bodied charges. Behind the way the poor were treated was a belief that the causes of poverty had to do with the personal shortcomings of individuals, but also a belief that the poor could better themselves with the proper guidance. While in the South, one's position was the result of biology, in the North, being poor was caused by moral failings that could be corrected—a relatively liberal ideology compared to that in South. For those who were able-bodied, the belief was that “achievement was limited only by failure to fulfill individual potential.”⁹⁹

Furthermore, private charity was not always very charitable. After periods of increased need, in which local governments had been forced to step in to provide more outdoor relief, local elite leaders would step in to wrest away the responsibility for outdoor relief from the public sector and replace it with private charity in order to limit indiscriminate giving and to turn back the growth of the belief that relief was a right, which they viewed as a threat. The Scientific Charity movement after the Civil War was such an effort. Argued one of the movement's leaders, “If unchecked, pauperism would continue to grow into a monster, ensnaring more and more of the honest poor in its tentacles, until it became society's master and destroyed the very foundations of civilized life.”¹⁰⁰ The ideal

99 Axinn and Levin, p. 59

100 Katz, p. 74.

charity organization society would replace indiscriminate giving with an effort to counsel the poor and to help them learn how to become self-sufficient. Material relief was to be denied except under the most dire circumstances.

But regardless of whether public efforts to provide relief in the Northeast were wholehearted, or whether private charity was really charitable, the Northeast, to a far greater extent than the South, has historically had to answer to the needs of its poor because the political economy of the North made its poor (and potential poor) a more dynamic force, even though the actual level of poverty in the South may have been even worse than in the North.

The main point here is that the same forces that inhibited the growth of public welfare in the South also inhibited the growth of private charity, while in the North, the need to deal with the issue of poverty led to both public welfare and private charity. Even when the private charity movement was hostile to public welfare, the two grew together; they were opposite sides of the same coin, representing two sides of a continuous debate over how to deal with the problem of poverty. In fact, the two were rarely able to avoid working together in partnership, at least to some extent. For example, in 1818, the Society for the Prevention of Pauperism in the City of New York created numerous committees for the purposes of investigating and reporting to the city government on the extent of problems it felt contribute to pauperism—including intemperance, lotteries, houses of ill fame, pawn-brokers, and gambling—in order to assist the city in controlling these institutions.¹⁰¹ In the

101 Axinn and Levin, p. 61.

1870s, Josephine Shaw Lowell, a leader of the scientific charity movement who insisted in principle on a sharp distinction between the public and private role in assisting the poor, insisted that private groups should inspect public institutions, and that public agencies should inspect those run by private groups.¹⁰² And, as noted earlier, throughout the 19th Century, private charities obtained a large amount of their resources from government sources.

Another important dynamic in this scenario is the intellectual element. As the North had to wrestle with the problem of poverty while the South was able to largely ignore it, it eventually became obvious that an explanation of poverty based solely on the flaws of individuals, and solutions to this problem based on such an explanation, would not suffice. In the depression of 1893, the dimensions of poverty grew so that “even conservatives had to admit the structural roots of unemployment. With millions of people out of work, no one could pretend that most of the unemployed simply did not want to work.”¹⁰³ Thus, by the 1930s, when the new public relief measures were being introduced were primarily to assist the North, where there was now a widespread belief in the structural causes of poverty, the South, retaining a largely biological view of poverty, was able to ensure it would retain the power to basically ignore the problem, to set low levels of relief and to discriminate against blacks.

Today, as I will discuss at length in Chapter 6, private charity is a far more democratic affair than it was many years ago. Some charitable organizations are grassroots,

102 Katz, p. 72

103 Katz, p. 149

and even large charities with elite leadership obtain a large portion of their participation—both through volunteerism and giving—from people of ordinary means. Thus, the amount of private charity that exists depends in part on the willingness of large numbers of people to contribute and to participate, which in turn must depend in part on the attitude people have toward those who are in need of assistance. Similarly, the amount of public welfare that exists must depend, at least in part, on whether the public will elect leaders who will choose generous policies toward the poor.

But current attitudes do not live in a vacuum; they evolve, and are thus affected by intellectual history. Simply put, owing to a history of wrestling with a problem that could never be ignored, the Northeast has developed a more liberal system of beliefs about the causes of poverty than has the South because of their regional histories. These histories have a great deal to do with different types of economic systems that existed between the two regions, and the retention of these histories has a large deal to do with different current attitudes which are manifested in what people are willing to do to help the poor today.

Thus, statistically, the region in which a state lies has a much stronger influence than does the condition of the state's economy on whether a state has high levels of private charity and public welfare. A group of states within a region that have vastly different economic conditions will tend to have fairly similar levels of public welfare and fairly similar numbers of private charities in relation to the population, and in relation to the number of people who need assistance.

Although I have only examined two regions to see what possible factors might

explain why different regions of the country appear to have different attitudes than others on public welfare and private charity, it should be possible to expand such a study to other regions. For example, why is New England more generous to its poor than the Middle-Atlantic states regardless of the level of personal income? Why do the four states in heart of the East North Central region tend to provide a similar level of welfare and charity despite wide disparity in their average income levels?

Whatever the specific factors that have led different regions to behave differently on these variables, one conclusion is clear: states and regions that exhibit high levels of public welfare also have large numbers of private charities, and vice-versa. This relationship is not a simple product of the resources the people in a state have, or of the amount of need that exists within a state, but appears to be the result of a combination of cultural and economic factors that affect the people's attitudes toward the poor, and thus affect both their willingness to pay taxes for public welfare and their desire to take their own initiative to help the poor through charity. Public welfare and private charity move together, not inversely.

An Alternative Explanation: Governmental Units and Private Charity. It might be argued that the positive relationships between the level of government spending and social welfare and the size of the charitable sector from state to state may simply be an artifact of the number of governmental units within a state. Historically, some regions of the country have developed with patterns of smaller and more numerous counties than have other regions, have subdivided into more municipalities than others, and contain more school districts and other subdivisions. 29 of the 50 states do not have townships, and the

likelihood of having townships mainly has to do with regional tradition--for example, all of the states in New England and the Middle Atlantic states, and most of the states in the Midwest have town governments, but none of the states in the South and none of the states west of Kansas have town governments.

The number of governmental units in a state could be theorized to have an impact on the size of the charitable sector in two ways. First, as I have noted in describing the work of Salamon, Wolch, and other scholars of the non-profit sector, there is a strong direct-funding relationship between government and non-profits. More governmental units might create more opportunities for non-profit organizations to obtain funding. Second, many charitable agencies are organized along governmental unit lines--the more governmental subdivisions that exist, the more divided up the charitable sector may be. If these are really the main factors that cause a relationship--if the size of the charitable sector in a state is simply a function of the number of governmental units--then I cannot go beyond the Salamon's "Partners in Public Service" argument to assert that there is more at play in the relationship between active government and active citizenship than a simple funding relationship.

Indeed, taking governmental units into account does yield some interesting results.

Most noteworthy:

- There is a significant positive relationship between the number of governmental units in a state per capita and the number of charities per capita (a .400 correlation at a significance level of .004), and

- there is an even stronger relationship between governmental units per capita and human services charities per capita (a .496 correlation, Sig. .000).

However,

- There is no relationship between the number of governmental units and the *assets* of the charitable sector within a state. This indicates that a state's having more or fewer governmental units does not to affect the overall level of private charitable organization within a state, but merely how the private agencies within a state choose to divide themselves up. In addition,
- the relationship between number of governmental units and number of charities per capita does not interfere with the relationship between government welfare spending and number of charities per capita. When controlling for governmental units, there is still a strong positive correlation between welfare spending and charities (beta .458, sig. .000). In other words, the relationship between welfare spending per capita and the number of charities per capita from state to state is not an artifact of the relationship between the number of governmental units per capita and the number of charities per capita.

It is also interesting that the relationship between the number of governmental units and the number of charitable organizations among *regions* does not hold in the same way that the relationship between government welfare expenditures and private charities does.

In Figure 6.4, it is apparent that one cannot predict the relative number of charities in a region from the relative number of governmental units, as one can from the level of state welfare expenditures. Among the regions that do not include the states with the lowest population densities, the two regions with the most charities per capita--New England and the Middle Atlantic States--are fourth and fifth in the number of governmental units per capita. The ones with the fewest charities per capita--the West South Central and East South Central regions, are second and third in number of governmental units per capita.

It is interesting that there are no town governments in the South Atlantic, East South Central, and West South Central states, and that these states have the fewest charities per capita. Particularly in the South Atlantic states, the overall small number of governmental units compared with the Northeast may reflect the historical political culture discussed a few paragraphs above--it was a culture in which political elites tried to control the number of outlets for political participation, including competition for political offices, and other types of participation, including charitable organization and volunteerism.

However, the fact that the other southern regions have compensated for the absence of town governments by creating large numbers of alternative types of governmental units and still have even lower numbers of charities than does the Southern Atlantic region seems to indicate that there is no direct relationship between number of governmental units and number of charities--a low number of both are probably separate and unrelated symptoms of a particular historical political and social environment.

Figure 6.3. Governmental units, measures of charity, and per capita income.

Region	Government Units Per Capita (per 1,000) (Average Rank)	Charities per capita (Average Rank)	Charities per poor (Average Rank)	Per Capita Income (Avg. Rank)
Eastern North Central (IL, IN, MI, OH, WI)	4.47 (21.6)	5.71 (30.2)	4.01 (27.6)	19.6
West South Central (AS, LA, OK, TX)	3.25 (26.5)	4.47 (41)	2.53 (44.25)	39
East South Central (AL, KY, MS, TN)	2.86 (30.5)	4.33 (43.5)	2.20 (45.5)	40.5
Middle Atlantic (DE, NJ, NY, PA)	2.77 (28.75)	6.67 (21.25)	7.03 (19.5)	7
New England (CT, ME, Mass., NH, RI, VT)	2.71 (27.83)	9.30 (7.5)	10.83 (5)	15.3
South Atlantic (FL, GA, MD, NC, SC, VA, WV)	1.32 (40.14)	5.01 (35.29)	3.85 (34.14)	26
Regions with Low Population Density States				
West North Central (IA, KS, MN, MO, NB, ND, SD)	11.55 (5.86)	6.88 (16.6)	6.49 (16.3)	28.16
Mountain (AZ, CO, ID, MT NV, NM, UT, WY)	4.94 (21)	5.81 (26.25)	4.75 (28.63)	34.38
Pacific (CA, OR, WA)	2.07 (29)	6.71 (20.33)	6.64 (16)	16

Conclusion to Chapter Six. If "crowding out" theorists are right, then states that spend large amounts of money on public welfare should have smaller numbers of charities within their borders than states that spend relatively small amounts on public welfare. But this appears to be far from the case. In fact, there is, by several measures, a strong and significant positive relationship between public welfare spending and the size of the

charitable community within a state. This relationship is not a mere artifact of the economic conditions in a state. Instead, it appears to have more to do with the political and cultural histories and traditions of the regions in which the states lie. The historical factors that have resulted in some regions demonstrating more concern and compassion than others about the problems of poverty through more generous social welfare programs are the same factors that have led to a more generous outpouring of private, voluntary assistance to assist people in need. One can more accurately predict a state's level of public welfare and private charity to assist the poor if one knows the region where the state is located than if one knows the economic conditions in the state.

If states tend to cling to regional norms of public welfare provision and charitable effort regardless of their individual economic situations, if these regional norms tend to result from shared historical circumstances among the states in a particular region, and if these historical circumstances tend to push attitudes and action regarding both public welfare and private charity in the same direction, then we can derive a general conclusion from these findings: an environment which fosters a relatively generous approach to public welfare is the same type of environment that will foster a large charitable community, and vice versa.

States that have been relatively stingy in their approaches toward public welfare—whether measured in relation to the size of the population, the level of wealth, or the level of poverty (or need) within the state—do not experience an outpouring of private charity to compensate for the lack of government generosity.

Although I have made suggestions about the possible causes of the positive

relationship between public welfare and private charity within states and geographical regions, this is only an empirical observation, and is not a causal argument. But it does lead to a very important suggestion: that if we seek to enhance the level of private charity within a state, whether for the purpose of helping the poor or for the purpose of building a vigorous civil society, we are more likely to achieve this in an atmosphere of governmental activism than in one of governmental stinginess.

CHAPTER SEVEN:

A VIEW FROM THE LEFT: ZERO-SUM THINKING IN REVERSE

The past three chapters have presented a challenge to the “crowding out” theory of public and private initiative to assist the poor, the conservative or right-of-center view that less government involvement in social welfare would foster a greater amount of private, voluntary efforts to assist people in need. I have provided evidence to suggest that people who volunteer to help people in need are driven by very personal motivations which have a great deal to do with their ability empathize with them. I have suggested that these motivations are likely to be dampened by public policy and political rhetoric that drives a wedge between potential volunteers and people who need assistance by communicating a message that those in need are suffering from solely individual rather than societal problems, that they are somehow different from the rest of us in the amount of responsibility they take for their own lives, and that they are on their own to solve their own problems. Turning to philanthropy, I have shown that empirical historical data do not support the conservative belief that more people tend to give to support private charity to help people in need when government “gets out of the way”; if anything, the opposite appears to be true. And, comparing the level of charity among the 50 states, I have demonstrated that, contrary to the suppositions of “crowding out” theory, states that publicly support a larger government effort to assist people who are in poverty also privately support greater levels of charitable organization to help the poor, and that the differences among states have more to do with

different regional traditions and historical attitudes about the poor than with local economic conditions or direct funding of charities by government sources.

However, as I pointed out in Chapter Two, some critics of private charity from the left share with critics of “big government” from the right an implicit either/or belief in a zero-sum game between public and private efforts to address the problems of poverty; they believe that private volunteerism and philanthropy distract people from addressing the broader political issues at the root of these problems, provide an excuse for inadequate public social welfare programs, and produce a host of other negative consequences. In this chapter and the next, I will present an argument that, just as conservatives are mistaken in their hostility to government social programs under the assumption that they inhibit private initiative to address the problems of poverty, some on the left are similarly mistaken in their hostility to private charity.

In this chapter I return to the use of data from my interviews with volunteer administrators and survey of volunteers in New York City to present an argument that the experience of volunteerism in direct services to people suffering from poverty-related problems produces increased awareness of the realities of the causes of poverty and the conditions poor people face. It also provides a vital constituency for those who are worst-off, and enhances desire for and activism to obtain public policies in their favor. In addition, private efforts can often provide a type and quality of services that could not be provided by government.

The Left View--The Harms of Private Charity

For critics from the left, the harms of private charity can be said to fall into roughly three categories. First, on an ideological level, charity reinforces inequality as a natural and inevitable part of life, perpetuates the perception of a morally superior or heroic upper class that displays its kindness to a class of inferior supplicants, and supports the notion that those in need should be thankful for what they receive--that the receipt of material and other needs of the poor is and should be seen as a favor and not a right. The highly publicized giving of gifts by the rich to the poor justifies the existence of vast inequalities by demonstrating how the rich benefit the poor.

"Fundamentally, the ideology of the elite," writes Theresa Odendahl, "depends on this perception of the middle and working classes--that the wealthy deserve their status. Conversely, the belief of the mass of citizens that a special minority must have special authority depends on the elite maintaining a posture of noblesse oblige. The complementary ideologies help explain the perennial fascination with wealth and the wealthy that is so notable a part of the attitude of the American people."¹⁰⁴ As David Wagner adds, it is by "reifying wealth into philanthropy" that "wealthy businesspeople and corporations are

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Theresa Odendahl, *Charity Begins at Home: Generosity and Self-Interest among the Philanthropic Elite* (New York: Basic Books, 1990), p. 9.

sanctified in our culture as being caring and socially responsible."¹⁰⁵

While charity is said to cement in the minds of the masses that the wealthy deserve their position in society, it is also argued that it reinforces the idea that the poor are deserving of the status they hold in society. As I quoted Wagner earlier, charity serves to glorify the rich as "heroes and model citizens who give" and presents the poor as "deferential and meek citizens who accept," and thus "delineates society with a clear boundary between moral and immoral,"¹⁰⁶

As a consequence, asserts Janet Poppendieck in writing about emergency food, this form of charity "humiliates the people who ask for it." According to her, charity is "offered with condescension and accepted in desperation that is necessitated by incapacity and failure." Giving charity requires the perception that the recipients are "somehow inferior." "Charity is simply not something we offer to people we see as our equals. The transactions in soup kitchens and food pantries undermine our cultural commitments to equality by daily defining people who use emergency food as appropriate objects of charity."¹⁰⁷ Poppendieck argues that recipients of charity are treated with suspicion and indignity, and are "depersonalized" in the process.

105 David Wagner, *What's Love Got to Do With It? A Critical Look at American Charity* (New York: New Press, 2000), p. 89.

106 Wagner, p. 73.

107 Janet Poppendieck, *Sweet Charity? Emergency Food and the End of Entitlement*, (Viking Penguin, New York, 1998), p. 230-254.

Many casual, as well as scholarly, observers of human services volunteerism share this perception of a vertical relationship between givers and recipients of charity that is demeaning to those on the receiving end—a relationship in which judgments are made about who is deserving and who is undeserving, in which the clients are required to participate in a prayer service to get food or are made to do “makework” for their pittance in order to build “character,” while the elite philanthropists get to salve their egos as they look down on the people over whom they have elected themselves benefactors. As Wagner puts it, charity is a way for those that benefit from the inequality in our society to “mitigate their guilt and attempt to at least symbolically display sympathy for the ‘Other’”¹⁰⁸

A second major criticism of charity is that, by focusing the attention of the volunteers, donors, and even the public at large, on the need to help individuals with personal problems one at a time through direct services, it distracts our attention from the broader inequities in society that are at the roots of the problems these individuals are facing. It thus directs people from getting involved in political advocacy to push for public policies that would erase these inequities and thus reduce the need for the private provision of services in which these volunteers and donors are now involved. Some critics of charity have argued that the massive formation of direct services organizations starting in the 1960s represents a “series of structural mechanisms to encapsulate and channel protest,” through which “formerly activist groups are funded in return for insurance of their depoliticization and their absorption within a system of bureaucratic and patronage relationships with the

108 Wagner, p. 9.

state and private sector organizations."¹⁰⁹ Political protest is replaced by direct service, and protest for political change to address the inequities that cause poverty is silenced. And charity programs "absorb the attention and energy of many of the people most concerned about the poor, distracting them from the larger issues of distributional politics."¹¹⁰

Wagner raises some provocative questions to illustrate this point: "What if all the energy that went into volunteering and working at millions of positions in the nonprofit economy were channeled elsewhere? What if these people were recruited as organizers of social action that demanded more for the needy? What if the challenge was seen as attempting to change society for the better rather than merely ladling out soup at a kitchen or making sandwiches at a shelter?" And what if "figures in American history such as Martin Luther King, Thomas Paine, Eugene V. Debs, Margaret Sanger, or Mother Jones had been content to serve at soup kitchens or join a religious mission somewhere? What if they had become therapists or professional administrators?"¹¹¹

Had these figures made these hypothetical decisions, not only would we be deprived of the social justice which they helped to achieve, but we would have even more inequality, for "the process by which the joys and demands of personal charity divert us from more fundamental solutions to the problems of deepening poverty and growing inequality" is complemented by a "corresponding process by which the diversion of our efforts leaves the

109 Wagner, p. 217

110 Poppendieck, p. 5-6

111 Wagner, p. 175

way wide open to those who want more inequality, not less.¹¹²

Closely related to the second criticism is another fundamental criticism of charity in America; that it provides an important excuse or justification for an anemic, insufficient social welfare state. As Poppendieck eloquently writes, "...the proliferation of charity contributes to our society's failure to grapple in meaningful ways with poverty. ...this massive charitable endeavor serves to relieve pressure for more fundamental solutions. It works pervasively on the cultural level by serving as a sort of 'moral safety valve'; it reduces the discomfort evoked by visible destitution in our midst by creating an illusion of effective action and offering us myriad ways of participating in it."¹¹³

While the existence of charity justifies an insufficient level of government social welfare provision, charity will never be a sufficient alternative to government programs, not only because the level of resources that can be obtained voluntarily will never be enough to keep up with the problems, but also because charity is so widely viewed as a social good that the actual ability of charity to accomplish concrete benefits is rarely scrutinized. The act of charity is so universally accepted as a good that we tend judge it by its intentions rather than by its output. Consequently, "charity is a ritual, unconcerned with its effects and almost never examined."¹¹⁴

112 Poppendieck, p. 19.

113 Poppendieck, p. 5

114 Wagner, p. 114

Just as, for conservatives, the argument about public social welfare provision and private voluntary initiative assumes that one of more will produce less of the other--a zero-sum game--so does this left view of charity make zero-sum assumptions about the relationship between government activism and private volunteerism in the area of poverty. For the left critics of charity, there is a choice between entitlement and charity, a choice between activism for political change and volunteerism in the provision of direct services for people in need, and--to follow the argument to its logical conclusion--we need to have less charity in order to get rid of this excuse for inadequate government attention to the problems of poverty.

Direct Services Volunteerism and Political Activism

Just as the rightist critics of government will be disappointed when an outpouring of private voluntary initiative fails to materialize in the wake of cutbacks in government social welfare programs, leftist critics of charity will be disappointed when a greater public outcry for more comprehensive social welfare provision fails to materialize in the wake of decreased charitable activity. I argue that this is true because the left critics of charity, like the proponents of charity on the right, fail to understand some of the real motivational factors behind the reasons that people volunteer. Furthermore, those critics on the left may fail to understand the ways in which people are likely to become aware of, and develop a sense of personal efficacy that makes them feel confident of their ability to do something about, the broader issues behind the impoverished conditions that many people face.

Voluntary Action is a Highly Democratic form of Social Participation. Earlier, I argued that few people would come out as volunteers to assist people in poverty if they were to perceive those people in the way that Marvin Olasky believes we should; we are unlikely to help people whom we believe suffer from moral flaws rather than from the inequities of our economic system, whom we believe have fallen because of personal failings such as slothfulness or a lack of personal responsibility. For if we view people who are poor in this way, we will not feel the sort of empathy with them that would enable us to get a feeling of personal satisfaction or fulfillment by helping them. But this sort of judgmentalism toward and looking down on people in need is just the sort of attitude that the critics of charity I have quoted ascribe to people who perform charity.

But, according to my own findings from the survey of volunteers and interviews with volunteer program administrators presented in Chapter Three, it is actually people who do not hold such elitist and judgmental views toward those less off than themselves, and who are thus most likely to be able to identify with them, who are most likely to want to help them.

The arguments of Wagner and Poppendieck and others imply that elitism is at play in most charity, in the act of giving and receiving. But, if anything, volunteerism and philanthropy, particularly in the field of human services to assist people in poverty, is more democratic than most areas of social life in America. Despite stereotypes of philanthropists and volunteers as coming from the upper classes, giving and volunteering is actually a

widespread activity among all sectors of the population. In 1998, an estimated 109 million people, or nearly 56 percent of all adults aged 18 or over, volunteered an estimated 19.9 billion hours, averaging about 3.5 hours a week. Most volunteers are far from being rich: 34.7 percent of people in households earning less than \$10,000 reported volunteering, as did 34.3 percent of people in households earning \$10–20,000, 45.2 percent in households from \$20–30,000, and 46 percent in households from \$30–40,000. While much higher proportions of the rich make financial contributions to charity than do people in lower income groups, still, nearly half of people in households earning less than \$10,000 give, as do 51 percent of those in households earning \$10–20,000, 65 percent of those in the \$20–30,000 range, and 72 percent of those between \$30–40,000.¹¹⁵

Considering this further, it should be noted that giving among people in lower income groups is deflated in comparison to those in upper income groups because the latter are exponentially more likely to itemize their income tax returns, and therefore have the extra incentive to make tax-deductible contributions. In addition, contributors from lower income groups give a much higher proportion of their income than do those in higher income groups: Contributors in the under \$10,000 category donated an average of 5.2 percent of their household income in 1998, a figure that gradually declined across income groups, dipping below 2 percent in the \$75,000–100,000 group before rising back up to 2.2 percent for the over \$100,000 group.¹¹⁶

115 Virginia A. Hodgkinson and Murray S. Weitzman, *Giving and Volunteering in the United States*, (Independent Sector, Washington, D.C.) 1996.

116 Hodgkinson and Weitzman

Giving and volunteering are also widespread across other demographic dimensions. For example, 52 percent of African-American households made charitable contributions and 47 percent of African-Americans volunteered in 1998. Nearly 63 percent of Hispanic households made contributions, and 46 percent of Latinos volunteered.

Differences among income groups in their levels of volunteerism and philanthropy may actually be negligible in the area we are concerned with in this study, human services. While there are no existing statistical studies matching giving by income group with the types of causes to which they contribute, the wealthy are obviously far more likely than lower income groups to give to arts and cultural institutions and to private educational institutions which largely serve their class. Together, these categories received 22 percent of charitable contribution dollars in 1998.¹¹⁷ It would be reasonable to expect that lower income groups are responsible for higher levels of contributions and volunteerism in human services than they are in their numbers for giving and volunteering overall. Additionally, a significant amount of volunteerism among elite income groups consists of service on boards of directors and on professional activities, such as sitting on a committee of the state or local bar association. It would be reasonable to deduce that people from lower income groups are more well-represented among the foot soldiers of volunteerism, doing the hands-on work of serving people in need.

If giving and volunteering--particularly to and in human services organizations--is

117 Ann E. Kaplan, Ed., *Giving USA, The Annual Report on Philanthropy for the year 1997*, (New York, American Association of Fundraising Counsel), 1998.

as widespread across the society as I argue it is, then it is difficult to argue that the nature of the relationship between givers and receivers is elitist in nature. This is more true if I am correct in my argument about the motivations of volunteers--they volunteer because they identify with, rather than look down on, people who are in need of their assistance.

Charitable Volunteerism Builds "Horizontal" Relationships Between People Where "Vertical" Relationships Would Otherwise Exist. According to the critics of charity, the elitist nature of charity and volunteerism results in the debasement and the stigmatization of the poor, reinforces the belief that the wealthy and the poor both deserve their status, and--again, as David Wagner states--"produces heroes and model citizens who give, and deferential and meek citizens who accept." While, ultimately, these critics would like to see a greater government commitment to eliminating poverty, even the recognition of a government-guaranteed right to the basic needs of life, they seem to be arguing that, even in the absence of an adequate government response to poverty, charity is an evil that debases the people it serves--charity is not only inferior to government programs as an approach to the problems of poverty, but is an absolute evil in and of itself.

But isn't it the fact of poverty itself--rather than the attempt by some people to take action and help those who are suffering from poverty--that debases people? It appears here that people who never think to go out and help other people get off the hook, while those who are at least willing to do something to reach out to those in need are castigated for trying to help!

If we look a bit more closely at the dynamics of volunteerism, I believe we will discover that there is more to the social relations inherent in charity than simply the creation of "vertical" relationships between the givers and the receivers, with an inherent power structure that states that some people are superior and others are inferior. In fact, it is the very existence of vast economic inequality among people, rather than the attempt to help those who are worse off, that creates "vertical" relationships. While charitable enterprises may reinforce these vertical relationships, it appears evident that they also do a great deal to break these down and help to build more "horizontal" relationships among people. Especially in the field of direct voluntary provision of human services, people who are willing to volunteer to help may learn things that will cause them to have increased respect for, understanding of, and identification with people who are less fortunate than themselves.

To examine further how we might view social welfare-oriented charity as a system for breaking down, rather than reinforcing, "vertical" relationships among people, it would be useful to make several observations about this unique sub-sector of the non-profit community.

First, in the field of human services, most organizations are not distant towers of bureaucracy, but are grass-roots in nature. Within the U.S. non-profit sector, there are well over 147,000 organizations (not including the doubtless large numbers that have assets under \$25,000 and therefore do not report to the Internal Revenue Service). "Large organizations with total expenses of \$10 million or more in 1992 represented four percent of public charities, but held half of all public support dollars and three-quarters of all expenses and

assets.”¹¹⁸ A disproportionate share of finances is concentrated in the fields of education and health, which tend to consist of large organizations, particularly in universities and hospitals. “Organizations with expenses of less than \$100,000 account for 41 percent of organizations...but report less than three percent of the public support dollars, expenses, and assets.”¹¹⁹ The human services field accounts for about 37 percent of all public charities in the United States, yet these 60,000 organizations receive only 11 percent of all revenues in the non-profit sector. Human services, the part of the non-profit sector that most often serves those who are poor, is the poorest sector in the non-profit world.

As I learned from my scores of interviews with non-profit administrators in New York City, smaller organizations are more likely to depend on volunteers rather than professionals to provide a wide array of services. Of the volunteers who work in the human services field, the vast majority are the “foot soldiers” of volunteerism who provide direct services to the agencies’ clientele, from feeding people in soup kitchens to staffing homeless shelters to mentoring and tutoring children and teenagers. In a survey of over 400 volunteers in the human services field in New York City conducted by this author, most did not come from elite income groups, but were “regular folk” who expressed altruistic motives, such as simply wanting to “do some good” as their main reason for volunteering.

While critics of charity often view volunteerism as a way that people from the

118 Carol J. De Vita, “Viewing Nonprofits Across the States,” *Charting Civil Society*, (The Urban Institute), August 1997.

119 De Vita

upper-middle class and the rich build a sense of moral superiority over their charges, whom they judge and try to improve, my own study, involving a survey of hundreds of volunteers and interviews with scores of non-profit administrators in New York City, provides evidence that the portrait these critics have painted is unfair. In the field of human services, volunteering can in fact bridge gaps and build understanding among people with vastly different backgrounds, under vastly different circumstances. In interviews with administrators of volunteer programs, a common theme was a sense that the volunteers over time gain respect and an ability to identify with the people they are helping. As one administrator of an educational program for women on welfare put it, "participating has dispelled a lot of stereotypes about our population. It's a powerful experience." The New York director of Mentoring USA spoke of how, in New York City, "people of vastly different economic circumstances live side-by-side" but do not get to know one another. Volunteering "fosters empathy and sensitivity," and is a way for the volunteers "to understand some of the issues in their own communities." And the administrator of a small non-profit which provides business clothes for poor women going on job interviews, and which involves volunteers as "personal shoppers" to assist the women in selecting outfits, spoke of how the mostly white volunteers and the mostly minority clients "get to understand one another." This administrator, an African-American woman, even acknowledged that she likes "the fact that most of the volunteers are not of color." She retells the story of a particular "white, elderly volunteer who had issues about race" when she started, but has become very "respectful" of the people she helps. Noting that the mostly black clients often start out with "issues" about the prospect of having white helpers, this administrator added,

“the learning goes both ways.”

For many people who volunteer in human services, coming in direct contact with people in need puts a human face on some of the problems they have read or heard about, and the volunteers often develop a more positive image of poor people than that depicted in the media. The vast majority of volunteers surveyed for this study did not attribute the problems of those they help to their own lack of responsibility, but instead expressed a belief that the people they help are mainly victims of societal inequities. And the longer they had served as volunteers, and the larger their commitment as expressed in how long and how regularly they volunteer, the more likely they were to disagree with the statement that the problems of the people they served were “individual problems, which should be addressed by personal improvements on the part of those who are suffering,” and the more likely they were to state that government is doing too little about the problems the volunteers are working on. These findings indicate that, the longer and more frequently people volunteer to help others who are less fortunate, the more sensitivity the volunteers develop to the circumstances under which their clients live, and the more they learn about the inequities that are often at the root of the problems their clients face.

Thus the dynamics of volunteerism and voluntary organizations that provide direct services to the poor are quite complex. On the surface, there may be an aspect of debasement of the poor in the act of giving and receiving. But that debasement is not the result of the giving and receiving itself, but of the very existence of poverty in the first place. In fact, the interaction that takes place between volunteers and clients in the field of human

services often provides a rare opportunity for people of vastly different backgrounds and circumstances to actually meet first-hand and to learn about each other, and thus has the ability to destigmatize, rather than to stigmatize, the poor.

Arguably, today, most private charity is conducted in a manner that is more respectful of the humanity and the rights of its clientele and therefore less stigmatizing and demeaning of them than is the public welfare system.

Some critics have argued that private charity tends to be judgmental and demeaning toward the recipients of aid and intrusive of their lives, that often charities make their assistance contingent on “character change,” such as development of work habits, temperance, and propriety.¹²⁰ But these criticisms might more accurately apply to the way people who need assistance are treated by the public welfare system than to the way they are treated by many private charities. As Andrew J. Polsky has pointed out, people who depend on government social welfare programs have become subject to regulation of the most private dimensions of their lives. “As critics have charged, those drawn into the public tutelary apparatus have faced demands that they change how they rear their children, adopt different spending habits, find a new residence, maintain sexual abstinence, and more; refusal to comply can mean the breakup of a family or incarceration....policymakers and the larger public have learned to devalue personal autonomy.”¹²¹

120 Wagner, p. 90.

121 Andrew J. Polsky, *The Rise of the Therapeutic State*, (Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1991, p. 16.

Theresa Funciello adds that the very process which people are forced to go through in order to obtain public benefits, and the way they are treated these people are treated in welfare offices, is often extremely demeaning and frustrating. "You wait and wait, shuttling back and forth in various lines like cattle to the slaughter. You want to wring the workers' necks, but you don't dare talk back. The slightest remark can set your case back hours, days, weeks, or forever....It's truly amazing that more welfare workers aren't killed; the torment so many of them inflict would break the patience of anyone whose life wasn't on the line. But that's always their ace in the hold. No check, no life."¹²²

In fact, the organizations involved in my survey tended to be far less judgmental toward, the recipients of their assistance, and more respectful in their treatment of them, than the government often is toward the clientele of public social programs. Generally, help was provided with "no questions asked," unlike government programs for which recipients must usually prove their need and are often subject to intrusive home visits and other requirements.

In many of the agencies, the voluntary nature of the services is central to the services themselves; voluntary in two senses--the people providing the services do so because they want to, and so do the people being served. The clients want to improve their lives, but unlike the people in New York City's "Work Experience Program," who are being forced to work in order not to lose their welfare benefits, the individuals receiving the services of these agencies are volunteers themselves. They choose to participate, or to have their children participate.

122 Theresa Funciello, *Tyranny of Kindness, Dismantling the Welfare System to End Poverty In America*, (Atlantic Monthly Press, New York 1993), p. 24-25.

Therefore, the agency staff and volunteers and the clients are engaging in a relationship similar to that between a for-profit service provider and a customer. As the Grand Central Neighborhood Service expresses it, “The cornerstone of our philosophy rests on a consumer-based service model recognizing clients as individuals who can--and must--prioritize their own needs and choose their own opportunities.” If they want to take advantage of the soup kitchen and homeless shelter programs available, they can do so, and if they want to go further and enter the programs aimed at providing tools for gaining employment and housing, they can do that too. The freedom of choice on both sides of this relationship creates an opportunity for “horizontal relationships” between the “givers” and “receivers.” The two can meet each other as equals.

Poppendieck, while criticizing many aspects of charitable programs, admits that clients she spoke to at soup kitchens and food pantries reflect the attitude that these private efforts were less intrusive of their lives and more respectful of their rights and their humanity: they “routinely told me that they preferred the welcome they received at a particular kitchen or pantry to the disrespect and abuse they perceived at the welfare department where many of them did have legally defined and enforceable rights.”¹²³

Helping Individuals Leads to Thinking About Larger Questions of Public Policy.

Critics of charity assert that the existence of a wide array of private social service organizations have justified inadequate public social welfare expenditures and programs. As Poppendieck writes, “the proliferation of charity contributes to our society's failure to

123 Poppendieck, p. 253

grapple in meaningful ways with poverty....this massive charitable endeavor serves to relieve pressure for more fundamental solutions." It makes it "easier for government to shed its responsibility for the poor, reassuring policymakers and voters alike that no one will starve." It reinforces "an ideology of volunteerism that obscures the fundamental destruction of rights."

However, if we hope for public provision to help eliminate poverty, we must be realistic about the factors that lead to government action to promote economic justice. As Piven and Cloward have observed, the chief reason that government expands social welfare is to regulate the labor force. "When mass unemployment leads to outbreaks of turmoil, relief programs are ordinarily initiated or expanded to absorb and control enough of the unemployed to restore order."¹²⁴ Or, popular discontent can be expressed at the polls, and in times of intense political competition, "political incumbents try to use the power and resources of government to intervene in the institutional arrangements that breed dissension or to develop public programs intended to recapture the allegiance of disaffected blocks."¹²⁵

But during more peaceful periods, when most people perceive the economy as being strong and relatively few people are protesting against existing social conditions, elite groups begin a backlash against public social welfare. As the labor market tightens, the business community begins to demand reforms in the welfare system to remove people from the rolls

124 Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, *Regulating the Poor; the Functions of Public Welfare* (Random House, New York, 1971) p. 3.

125 Piven and Cloward, p. 40

and reduce benefits so that people in the lowest economic classes will have no alternative to accepting low wages and poor working conditions in order to survive. Because fewer people are suffering, it is easier to make the argument that the problems of the poor are the result of their own laziness and immorality, and that the best way to help them is to get them out of dependency and into the workforce.

This theory has proven prescient in the 1990s, when the economy zoomed, many people perceived themselves to be benefitting, and it became possible to argue that poor people have no excuse for failing when it is obviously possible to get ahead through hard work. Conservative Republicans rose up to take control of both houses of Congress in 1994 largely by firing up popular discontent toward spending of public tax dollars on “welfare mothers” and other “lazy” poor people.

It seems illogical, then, at a time when social movements of the poor appear have been silenced, and just a few short years after this rhetorical attack on the poor, that poor-bashing has so quickly become politically incorrect, not only for liberals, but for conservatives as well. In the 2000 presidential election season, all of the candidates for the Republican nomination had to present their arguments for government austerity as being good for those who have been left out of the recent prosperity. The nomination winner, George W. Bush, has had to create the concept of “compassionate conservatism” in his effort to capture the mainstream of the American electorate. The concept of the irresponsible poor has quickly become politically incorrect, and welfare reform has been repackaged as a way to ensure that nobody is left out of reaping the benefits of the current economic expansion.

Despite the truth of Piven and Cloward's expectations about a backlash against social welfare, there appears to be a force in existence that has worked to defend the poor against becoming even further stigmatized and has at least provided a final line of defense to protect the poor against the complete destruction of the social safety net. The non-profit human services sector has created a constituency for the poor that has played a significant role in ensuring that politicians cannot ignore the need for compassion, at least in their rhetoric, and has thus helped to soften the blows that have been directed at the poor. The very existence of the vast array of services being provided, and the publicity these efforts bring to the plight of those who have not been so fortunate, has helped to keep the problems of poverty in the public eye.

It would be inaccurate to characterize involvement of millions of volunteers in non-profit human services organizations as a wholesale retreat from political activism in the interest of the poor. These volunteers' involvement in direct services is no small part of the factors that enable organizations concerned about the problems facing the poor to spread publicity and to draw public attention these issues. Volunteerism provides an opportunity for large numbers of people to see past the images of the poor portrayed by the media and to learn the reality of their situations first-hand. Volunteerism thus has a significant educational role, creating a large constituency of people armed with the knowledge needed to keep them from being easily persuaded that the problems their clients face are entirely their own fault. As Michael Ignatieff has observed, "...poor people have almost always

remained strangers. We pass their houses on a train or in a car, read about them as individual cases; study them as abstract statistics..¹²⁶ Serving as volunteers at least puts people in a position "to see injustices to which they otherwise might not have been exposed in the course of their ordinary middle-class lives."¹²⁷

The educational impact volunteerism has on the public bears similarities with the educational importance of the national park system. People who merely hear about the importance of our natural heritage from a distance may be persuaded that environmental conservation is an important cause, but getting masses of people to perceive conservation as a priority, as something they are ready to push for and participate in, requires a closer connection with nature. By having tens of millions of Americans visit our national parks each year, we build a sensitivity toward nature that is much deeper than that which can be fostered through nature programs on television; we develop a real constituency for nature that would not otherwise exist.

In the same way, by involving masses of people in direct services toward people who are poor, non-profit service agencies makes the poor real to those volunteers, and brings home to those volunteers what would otherwise remain vague, distant, and easy to ignore. People who volunteer in social welfare-related causes therefore become more likely to envision a better society, one in which elimination of poverty is a government priority. If

126 Michael Ignatieff, *The Needs of Strangers: An Essay on Privacy, Solidarity, and the Politics of Being Human* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1986), p. 18.

127 Robert Wuthnow, *Acts of Compassion*, (1991, Princeton University Press), p. 253.

there were a vast decline in the number of voluntary efforts and the number of people involved in them, there would be a loss of a great deal of sympathy and understanding of the problems of the people they serve, and efforts to ensure the provision of government social welfare and ultimately to guarantee a right to certain basic human needs might suffer even worse setbacks than they have experienced in the past decade.

Thus, voluntary activities are a breeding ground for collective movements to demand government action to ameliorate social and economic inequities. In fact, many great reformers started in voluntary direct service capacities. Jane Addams started out working to help disadvantaged individuals, and quickly learned that larger solutions were needed to help improve the conditions of the poor. She became a force in Chicago behind the creation of juvenile courts, the first "mother's pension law, tenement regulations, an eight-hour workday law for women, factory-inspection laws, and workers' compensation. She grew from a helper of individuals into a lobbyist for social justice.¹²⁸ Similarly, while Wagner wonders if we would have missed out on the benefits of Margaret Sanger's political activism if she had chosen direct service instead of public advocacy, she in fact first served as a volunteer helping individuals in need, an experience which caused her to see the need for larger, political action to fight for the right to birth control. "Like many volunteers, she was motivated by seeing the plight of particular individuals, not by an abstract view of the impoverished masses." But the individuals she met "forged in her a resolve to do something

128 Wuthnow, p. 249.

more, to seek out the root cause of the evil she saw resulting in miseries....¹²⁹ As Skocpol observes, considering how women in voluntary charitable organizations gradually became important advocates for government action around the turn of the last century, "Volunteerism and governmental action have never been simple opposites in the United States. Volunteerism often leads toward involvement with government, and gives rise to new demands for public social provision."¹³⁰

The volunteer experience provides a unique opportunity for millions of people to learn about certain issues in a way that could not be done from a distance, and thus creates a constituency that will serve as a buffer against the worst attacks against the poor.

The Non-Profit, Social Services in the Community Create Political Participation, Rather Than Distracting People From It. At the individual level, for many volunteers, the drive to make a difference in the lives of individuals may not lead to political action to attack the root causes of the problems their clients face. But even when individuals do not move to a larger frame of action, often the organizations in which they work do. Organizations that work on the problems that poor people face--hunger, homelessness, mental illness, illiteracy, drugs, domestic violence, etc.--develop expertise on these problems. Out of their work helping individuals and groups of individuals, these organizations often develop public

129 Wuthnow, p. 250.

130 Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press), p. 17.

advocacy efforts on issues that affect their client populations, ranging from legislative lobbying at the local, state, and national level, to simply advocating for individual clients before administrative boards when welfare and other benefits are denied or other issues arise.

Among the organizations where I interviewed administrators, the vast majority are involved in some kind of advocacy. Some of these agencies regard lobbying for public policies favorable to their clientele to be part of their mission. For example, several of the organizations are involved in assisting the homeless or people who are in danger of becoming homeless--including the City-Wide Task Force on Housing Court, which has information tables in the Branches of the New York City Housing Court to provide information and advice to tenants who don't have attorneys; Housing Works, which deals with the housing problems of poor people with AIDS; the Neighborhood Coalition for Shelter, which runs homeless shelters and other programs for homeless people; and Women In Need, which, among numerous services, runs various programs to help homeless women--have all been involved in lobbying the New York State Legislature and were involved in demonstrations when the Legislature was considering lifting several restrictions on landlords in 1998. Some of these organizations have also been involved in demonstrations and lobbying of the New York City Council against a new policy to evict people from homeless shelters who were not trying to find jobs. This is not unusual; the minutes of committee hearings in local, state, and national legislative bodies are filled with the testimony of staff members of organizations that have learned first-hand about the needs of their clientele and

the obstacles they face. Often, these organizations pick out some of their most articulate clientele to provide personal testimony on behalf of the people who might be jeopardized by proposed policies.

Non-profit service organizations often become active in ensuring the enforcement or the fair administration of legislation and government policies in order to make sure they serve their client populations in the way they were intended. One example of this from my interview sample in New York City is an organization called We Can. Because of the difficulty people have in redeeming bottles and cans, We Can runs its own redemption center, paying homeless people the deposit fees on bottles and cans they collect and sending them back to the manufacturers to collect the fees. The administrators of this small organizations have learned in the process the vast failure to enforce New York State's "bottle bill," and have become involved in monitoring the performance of stores and manufacturers in redeeming containers, and urging state enforcement agencies to force them to adhere to the law.

Groups that are not involved in lobbying and protest activity are often at least involved in advocacy at the individual level. Among the social services organizations where I conducted interviews, several that as a policy do not engage in directly political activities do engage in activities such as advocating for their clients at "fair hearings" before administrative bodies when they are being denied welfare or other benefits to which they believe they are entitled. Organizations that provide direct services to people in need often become advocates for their clients in the court system as well. Most notably, many

communities in America, particularly large cities, contract with private, non-profit legal services organizations to provide to indigent defendants their constitutional right to counsel. But, while the charge of legal services providers is to provide legal defense to individuals, these organizations often learn about inequities in the law, or in the treatment of defendants by law enforcement agencies or by the courts. Frequently, legal defense organizations file class action suits on behalf of entire classes of defendants in order to correct these inequities. Similarly, legal services organizations that are created to represent people in other types of legal cases, such as tenants in eviction proceedings, file lawsuits to challenge laws that are unfair not only to their individual clients, but to tenants as a class.

As Michael Sosin has pointed out, in many communities agencies that provide material assistance to the poor form coalitions to advocate collectively for the people they serve. For example, in one community he studied, a group of agencies formed a Food Task Force, which successfully persuaded their local government to provide breakfast in school for inner-city children, and a coalition of housing organizations in the same county lobbied for additional homeless shelters.¹³¹ In my own sample, several organizations that were engaged in "political" activity belonged to coalitions of organizations pushing for legislation on a variety of issues. For example, Women In Need belongs to a coalition of child care agencies, a coalition of substance abuse agencies, and a coalition of private homeless shelter providers, all of which do lobbying in the State Legislature. The private shelter coalition,

131 Michael Sosin, *Private Benefits; Material Assistance in the Private Sector* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1986), p. 146.

consisting of agencies that service the City of New York, was actually engaged in an act of civil disobedience at the time I was conducting my interviews—they had refused to evict clients who had not met job seeking requirements mandated by the City, and were soon to go to court to settle this dispute. But organizations that think of themselves as totally non-political are also involved in coalitions that are political. For example, Shelter and Food for the Homeless, a church-related soup kitchen in the East Village, belongs to Bread for the World, an international organization that lobbies on food policies, and also belongs to the New York City Coalition Against Hunger and signs on to petitions seeking action from the City and State governments.

Even organizations that avoid all direct advocacy of any kind, such as Mentoring USA, will sometimes encourage their volunteers to become involved in issues that they learn about in the course of their work. The director stated that volunteers often become “acutely aware” of problems in the schools because of their interaction with the youths they mentor or tutor—such as poor training in certain skills, lack of supplies and books, conditions that are dangerous to children with asthma—and that he personally encourages the volunteers to write to the Mayor and Governor and other public officials and to get involved on their own in other ways.

Over 40 years ago, Anthony Downs showed how the amount of information people acquire about political issues depends on whether the cost, in terms of time and effort, outweighs the benefits of acquiring this information. The people who are most likely to bear the cost of gaining expertise in any particular issue area are those who seek to lobby

government for a particular policy outcome from which they will profit. "The men who can best afford to become lobbyists in any policy area are those whose incomes stem from that area. This is true because nearly every citizen derives all his income from one or two sources; hence any government policy affecting those sources is of vital interest to him. In contrast, each man spends his income in a great many policy areas, so that a change in any one of them is not too significant to him. Therefore, men are much more likely to exert direct influence on government policy formation in their roles as producers than in their roles as consumers. In consequence, a democratic government is usually biased in favor of producer interests and against consumer interests, even though the consumers of any given product usually outnumber its producers."¹³²

The presence of a strong sector of private social services organizations dedicated to helping people who are poor creates a cadre of "producers"—professional and volunteer staff—who have the organizational resources, and enough interest in influencing public policy to make the necessary commitment of time, energy, and money to become experts on issues affecting the poor. In the absence of this group of experts who have learned from their experience in their field the realities of poverty and who have the incentive and resources to monitor government policies and performance, we would lose a great deal of the information about the conditions of the poor and about the government's performance in relation to the poor, and the rest of us would have no way of evaluating government

132 Anthony Downs, "An Economic Theory of Political Action," *Journal of Political Economy* 65 (1957), p. 135.

policies and holding government accountable for helping people get out of poverty. And there would be no voice in the system of influence to advocate for the interests of poor people, leaving a vacuum that would be filled exclusively by lobbyists who have an interest in reducing efforts to assist the poor.

Testimony to the important role charitable organizations play in advocating for the interests, needs, and rights of their clientele is provided by the long-standing controversy over advocacy efforts by charitable organizations that was raised most recently after the Republican takeover of Congress in 1994. In 1995, Congressman Ernest Istook of Oklahoma introduced legislation to make nonprofit organizations that engage in lobbying Congress ineligible for federal grants. A version of this legislation, characterized by the non-profit community as an effort to "silence the advocacy voice of the nation's charities and other nonprofits," was reported out of the House in 1996 as an amendment to an appropriations bill, but was ultimately rejected in a Senate-House conference committee. In 1996, the Republican Party leadership included in the party platform an endorsement of the Istook Amendment, pledging to end "welfare for lobbyists." While the Istook Amendment never became law, a new bill was introduced in 1998, dubbed by some as the "Son of Istook" amendment. Had this law passed, charitable organizations that receive federal grants would be prohibited from lobbying their local and state legislatures. Noted Let America Speak, a coalition of organizations formed to fight against such proposals, "This is a time when Congress is asking the nonprofit sector to help take over functions formerly performed by the federal government. Ironically, just when charities need to be working

closely with local governments -- and local governments are seeking the input of charities -- the Son of Istook amendment would impede such cooperation.” Other proposals along the same lines have been introduced in the House, including a so-called “Truth in Testimony” law that would require organizations receiving government funds and testifying before Congress to disclose that they receive those funds, and expunging from the hearing record any testimony given by a grant recipient that failed to make such a disclosure.¹³³ Similarly, Congress has successfully moved to limit legal services organizations that receive money from the federal government from filing class action suits.

Conservative support for preventing non-profit organizations from continuing their advocacy role exists because of the correct perception that non-profit organizations, especially those in human services, often turn the first-hand experiences and the lessons learned by their volunteers and staff into demands for increased provision for the people they serve, for laws designed to recognize the rights of and to prevent discrimination against these people, and advocacy to ensure the just administration of these provisions and enforcement of these rights and protections.

Those who want government to play a significant role in protecting people from poverty and lifting people out of poverty should realize that this is far less likely to happen in the absence of a strong voluntary sector. The existence of a sector of society that stands on the front lines and learns the realities of problems that exist, that can make the rest of us more aware of and sensitive to these realities, and that serves as an advocate before

133 Let America Speak website, www.lebcnet.com.

government for populations that need services, is essential to prevent these groups from becoming isolated and vulnerable to further attack. Without the voices of these service agencies being heard, policies toward people in need would likely be far harsher than they now are.

Civil Society in Its Deepest Sense. Robert Putnam and other theorists of “civil society” or “social capital” have, over the past decade or so, emphasized the importance of civil institutions outside the realm of the governmental and for-profit sectors to a vigorous democratic society. Through these institutions, people develop a sense of participation; a sense of sociability and good neighborliness outside of their closest circles of friends and kin that breeds concern for broader societal goals rather than merely their own well-being as isolated individuals; and a sense of confidence in their own ability to make a difference, in the community, which leads to a greater sense of political efficacy and increases the likelihood that they will engage in the types of activity that holds government accountable and ensures that it acts in the public interest. Civil society is thus not an end in itself; it is a bulwark against the isolation and alienation that lead to totalitarianism, it is a way to ensure that we rely on each other instead of exclusively on “big government” to provide for our needs, and it is a way to ensure that we have the wherewithal to keep government accountable to and effective for the people.

As an example of civil society, I contend, volunteerism and philanthropy to help those among us who are in need is a model manifestation of a strong civil society because it cannot occur without a good deal of “social capital” already in existence—we will only

volunteer to help others if we have developed an orientation toward cooperating among each other, and we will find it fulfilling to help others if we have a certain degree of other-orientedness, rather than a feeling of isolation from each other.

In turn, volunteerism is the epitome of how our ties to each other and ability and desire to cooperate helps to “make democracy work”—a wide spectrum of people participate, they gain an understanding of and empathy for each other, they become committed to addressing larger problems in the society, and they form the basis for participation in the political system to help influence the kind of government action that will help those in need, or at least to prevent complete subjugation and degradation of those in need.

Without a voluntary sector to speak on behalf of people in need, politicians might respond to, or even foster, a public mood that calls for a far harsher treatment of this population as a scapegoat for many of our societal problems. In this way, this piece of our civil society serves as a defense against the isolation and destruction of people.

The Unique Benefits of Voluntary Human Services Provision for the People Served.

While I have addressed the alleged negative political consequences of charity—the claims that charity reinforces elitist views and legitimates vast economic inequality, that it distracts people from working for “real change” by miring them in the individual problems of their clientele, and that it provides an excuse or justification for inadequate government social welfare provision—it is also important to address the claims that charity is “inadequate” and fails to truly help the people it claims to serve. There would seem to be

something empty about supporting volunteerism as a worthy goal because of its political benefits without examining whether volunteerism actually helps the people it intends to serve. Otherwise, it would appear that my argument is that we should get people to volunteer regardless of the productivity and actual amount of help they will provide to the people they serve simply to achieve a beneficial side-effect. Therefore, I want to address the criticisms of some commentators who question whether volunteerism actually plays a unique and valuable role in our society--one that cannot be played by government--in helping client populations.

Based on my own survey of private agencies that provide human services to poor populations, I believe there is a unique role that a large category of these organizations would continue to play even if the government vastly expanded the social safety net by increasing, rather than decreasing, its level of welfare payment and services to the needy. Even if government moved to eliminate many of our social problems--for example, guaranteeing all people the right to a basic standard of living by creating a national minimum income--these organizations would continue to play a vital social services role in our society. In fact, I believe this category of agencies would grow.

In order to explain this, it is necessary to take a very brief look at the history of provision for people in need during the second half of this century.

Up to the Great Depression of the 1930s, public relief for people in poverty was seen as a state and local responsibility. Because of the vast inadequacy of state and local welfare provision, private charity had a central role in the provision of direct relief. During economic crises, one of the reasons that proposals for the federal government to take on a

role in welfare provision were rejected was that “the fountains of charity will be dried up at home....”¹³⁴ Instead of calling for the use of federal resources to provide relief during times of crisis, federal administrations would instead act as cheerleaders for private, voluntary efforts to help those suffering, as did the Hoover administration early in the Great Depression, when its main response to the crisis was to work to publicize the need for charity and to call for better cooperation among local anti-poverty efforts.¹³⁵

Of course, because of the vast dimensions of the crisis of the 1930's and the social and political upheaval that was beginning to become a real threat, the federal government finally had to accept the new role of being the primary provider of relief to those suffering from poverty and unemployment. Although there have since been fluctuations in the level of generosity of public social welfare, the federal government has retained its role as the main welfare provider.

The federal role in welfare provision was vastly expanded by the Johnson administration during his War on Poverty in the 1960's. So too was the relationship that has always existed between government and the non-profit sector. Community Action Programs, such as Head Start and Upward Bound, as well as variety of day care, job training, job placement, counseling, mental health, legal services, and others, were conducted through contracting out with non-profit community organizations which would actually provide the services.

134 Taken from a veto message by President Franklin Pierce, quoted in *Piven and Cloward*, op. cit., p. 47.

135 See *ibid.*, p. 50.

As Michael Katz has observed, the expansion of the federal role in welfare provision, and the role voluntary organizations now play in service provision, has had a major role-changing impact on the voluntary sector. "...voluntary agencies have become increasingly dependent on public funds....As so much more of their income came from government sources, voluntary agencies more frequently became service contractors, circumscribed by the specifications of their customers," rather than being innovators and pioneers. Only the appearance of new types of voluntary organizations, such as alternative agencies, quasi-governmental organizations, and a proliferation of self-help, mutual aid, and consumer-oriented associations kept alive voluntarism's innovative spirit as established agencies, constrained by their dependence on public funds and the conservatism of their own bureaucracies, largely abandoned invention and advocacy."¹

Indeed, the shape of the non-profit, voluntary sector has vastly changed, but it is possible that these changes have actually raised the level of innovation and the range of types of services they provide, in such a way that many agencies now elude traditional criticisms of charity as elitist, demeaning, and ineffective. By taking over the central role in providing basic assistance to those who are needy, government has enabled many agencies in the non-profit social services sector to turn from relief provision to playing innovative roles in providing unique services and fulfilling needs that may once have been neglected. This can be explained more clearly by dividing human services non-profits into two basic categories:

1 Katz, p. 263.

Non-Profits Social Services Organizations As an Extension of Government. About a third of all revenues received in the non-profit sector come from federal, state, and local government, but the human services sub-sector depends on government sources for slightly over a half of its funding. These statistics may be somewhat misleading, however, because many organizations receive nearly all of their funding from government sources and many are nearly entirely funded by private sources. In addition, many religious organizations, which do not receive government funds, perform social services.

The vast majority of government funding of non-profits goes to the agencies that constitute an extension of government, the organizations with whom government contracts in order to perform services under government programs.

The question of the importance of this sector to adequate services for the poor is one of management: These programs could be run directly by government employees or by the personnel and volunteers of the community agencies. Depending on community agencies may have several advantages, such as being less expensive and being more adaptable to the needs of individuals in the particular communities. While this category of organizations is thought of as circumscribed by the specific tasks laid out for them in their government contracts, there is a certain amount of room for innovation in the way that services are delivered. For example, the administration of Mayor Giuliani in New York has essentially stopped building shelters for the homeless, and has instead contracted with several private agencies to provide shelter. While the Mayor may

be criticized for reducing the quantity of effort to house the homeless, some of the non-profit shelters offer more services and arguably more help for their clients.

Alternative Non-Profit Social Service Organizations. There are two types of organizations in this category, which are not entirely easy to distinguish from each other. Some of these organizations are essentially dedicated to compensating for inadequacies in government services. Since the early 1980's, when there were major cutbacks in some welfare programs, and existing welfare has not kept up with increasing prices for necessities, emergency food agencies such as soup kitchens and food pantries have proliferated. In New York City, where there was a mere handful of soup kitchens in 1980, there were over 700 by 1992, and there are now over 1,100. Similarly, the number of homeless shelters in New York City has dramatically risen, largely to compensate for the growing inadequacy of the number of beds in shelters provided by the government. Also falling into this category are the growing number of volunteer tutoring programs that is largely a response to a perceived inadequacy in public education. It can be argued that these privately provided services would be less necessary or unnecessary if there was a greater commitment by government to providing adequate levels of welfare, unemployment benefits, public housing, and mental health services. We could term these as *compensatory services*, because they are essentially compensating for the inadequacy of government services.

The other type of alternative social services organization comprises those that perform services that it would be difficult to imagine government providing. These agencies are able to develop innovative programs that supplement the basic services provided by government

welfare programs. Most of these types of agencies receive little or no subsidization from government sources. Among the 40 organizations in New York City where I conducted interviews with program directors and volunteer coordinators, this was the prevalent type of agency. We could term these as *complementary services*, because they have staked out unique territory to do things that complement the role that government is asked to play in the post New Deal world.

What I term complementary, alternative services is the category of services that would continue to play an important role, even a more important role, if there was growth in government provision of social welfare and social services. The reason is that organizations in this category tend to benefit from the role-changing impact that increased government social welfare provision has on the non-profit sector. If private agencies are depended upon for a large portion of the giving of financial relief to people who are poor, then this will be the first priority of the non-profit community and its funders--raising money to give to people who need to eat and obtain shelter, or feeding people directly in soup kitchens and housing them in shelters.

But if private agencies are released from this responsibility by an increase in government social welfare, they become able to do more creative things--to create new types of services that government bureaucracies often lack the innovation and incentive to provide

In my survey of the non-profit human services community in New York City, I encountered many organizations that fall into the category of what I call complementary services. Here are several examples of this category of agency and the types of services they

provide:

Grand Central Neighborhood Social Services (GCN) is an innovator in helping homeless people rebuild their lives. In addition to compensatory programs--a soup kitchen and a homeless shelter--the agency runs a "Pathway to Employment" program in which clients are offered workshops in which volunteers from the business community discuss aspects of how to conduct oneself on a job, how to make and keep a personal budget, and various other topics. They are offered internships in order to gain the references they will need to find outside employment. Most of the people on the staff of GCN are former participants in this program. In the agency's "Pathway to Housing" program, instead of merely placing the participants in a shelter, but are taken through a series of steps--first being placed in a temporary shelter, then being moved into transitional housing with "structured living requirements." Once clients have gained positive references from the shelter and transitional housing providers, GCN helps them to secure permanent residency in privately owned buildings, subsidized apartments, or supportive housing programs. GCN also holds "Network Fairs," bringing people living on the street to nearby locations where social service agencies share information about the array of available services and enrolling interested participants.

The Family Center in Manhattan assists adolescents in poor and minority families with AIDS. Staff and trained volunteers assist seriously ill parents with planning for the future of their children, conduct a "buddy program" to ease a child's transition from one care giver to another, help new care givers plan to fulfill the emotional needs of children who have lost parents to AIDS, work to help children who lose parents avoid behavior common to many in this situation, such as drug use and risky sexual behavior, operate a computer center for

children to learn computer skills, and offer a panoply of other services to this population.

Women In Need focuses on innovative services for homeless and disadvantaged women and their children. Its alcohol and substance abuse treatment center provides on-site child care, counseling, acupuncture, nutrition and health, family reunification, and education and employment services. Its children's day care program provides year-round after school and full-time summer programs, offering literacy education, creative arts, computers, and homework assistance, as well as off-site trips and community activities. The "Educational and Employment Services" program provides a continuum of services to help women "reenter the spheres of education and employment with confidence." With an exclusively female staff and volunteer corps, WIN offers its clients with an empathetic and holistic approach.

Project Hope in Brooklyn involves staff and volunteers working to with former substance abusers who lack skills needed to obtain employment. It matches up clients with volunteers for long-term, one-on-one tutoring, and also provides a wide range of counseling, employment, and other services.

Operation Frontline mobilizes culinary and nutrition professionals as volunteers, who teach cooking classes focusing on nutrition and food budgeting to people who are at risk of hunger and malnutrition. In addition there is a financial planning curriculum designed to teach individuals with limited resources the basics of personal finance.

The Fresh Air Fund offers children from the inner-city the opportunity to have a summer vacation just like more advantaged kids, giving them a respite from the tough environments in which they often live, through its own summer camps and through carefully supervised arrangements with thousands of volunteer hosts who take in children from the City

for the summer.

Dress for Success works with women who are trying to enter or reenter the workforce. Donated used business clothes--which must be in perfect shape--is given to the clients. The agency employs volunteer "personal shoppers", who spend hours with each client, helping them to pick out business suits and accessories for interviews. Once a client obtains a job, she comes back for more clothing, and usually comes away with enough clothing to wear something different every day of the week. An ongoing relationship is maintained with the clients, who return for lectures that are offered on budgeting, child care, "cheap summer fun," and other topics.

Project Renewal employs professional "outreach teams" that find homeless people and offer food, safe housing, and medical treatments. Those who choose to accept services are placed in various programs depending on the causes of their homelessness. Treatment programs for mental illness and for alcohol and drug addiction, on-site health services, special services for domestic violence victims, residences, assistance with budgeting and job searching, and numerous other services are offered in a comprehensive approach to tackling the problems faced by people who are homeless and following through to help ensure success.

Mentoring USA, the Children's Aid Society, Catholic Big Brothers/Big Sisters, and a host of other agencies offer mentoring programs--the area of volunteerism which is growing most rapidly in recent years. Mentoring programs provide an adult companion of the same gender for children in homes that are without a same-gender parent, providing a role model for the child, usually spending one day a week or one day with the child. But there are many programs that involve a lesser commitment, such as education-based mentoring that merely

provides an adult to help with schoolwork for an hour a week.

The Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services runs a program in The Bronx for parents who have separated and have child custody proceedings ongoing in the Family Court. Trained volunteers oversee "supervised visitations" for the non-custodial parent and his or her children. Court Appointed Special Advocates is another private organization that forms chapters in various counties and makes itself available to the courts, so that when a child is placed in foster care, a judge can appoint a trained volunteer to visit the foster family on a regular basis and report to the court on how the child is doing and is being treated. Both of these organizations are examples of privately created programs that have offered their services to governmental bodies. The independent nature of these organizations qualifies them to perform an advocacy role in the courts on behalf of children when appropriate.

These and other innovative programs are unique in that they have designed their own, creative approaches to problems people face and offer their services to those who wish to take advantage. Unlike a simple soup kitchen, where a hand-out is exchanged for a diminution of guilt on the part of the volunteer serving the food--something that could arguably be done by the government in a less demeaning way by an increase in welfare benefits--the staff and volunteers at Grand Central Neighborhood Services are ready to build a relationship with the person who comes to their "drop-in" center. Mentors, "buddies", and tutors are committing themselves to a relationship as well.

The more that government provides the so-called "handouts" of welfare--the money benefits, shelter allowances, food stamps, shelters--the more that private agencies can specialize in the things that they can do in a unique fashion. In other words, as government

has played an increasing role as the main provider of relief to people who hit hard times, the more non-profit human services agencies are displaced from this role, thus freeing up the voluntary community--its funders, professionals, and volunteers--to provide innovative services that government bureaucracies cannot provide.

Evidence of the Positive Affect of Volunteerism in Direct Human Services on Awareness of the Political Aspects of Problems--The Volunteer Survey Revisited

I have pointed to several reasons for disagreement with those who believe volunteerism in providing direct service to people who are economically disadvantaged does more harm than good on the basis that it, among other things, detracts from public advocacy for real change, justifies an inadequate government response to poverty, and legitimizes vast economic inequality in our society. In response to these criticisms, I pointed to several reasons that we should think of direct services volunteerism as a promoter of, rather than as a detractor from, the effort to effect greater efforts by government to address poverty, as a way to get people involved in public policy activism rather than as a way to divert people away from such action, and as a way to tear down the walls that prevent people from different backgrounds from understanding one another.

These positive effects which I attribute to volunteerism are primarily educational in nature, and data obtained through my survey of volunteers and interviews with volunteer program administrators in New York City provide some evidence of this educational process at play in affecting the viewpoints and attitudes of the respondents.

The Lessons of Voluntary Experience. As demonstrated in Chapter Three, when volunteers were asked a series of questions to gain an understanding of their perspective on the relationship between their own voluntary activity and government action to address the problems their clientele face, the variables that had the greatest effect on their perspective were their levels of experience in volunteerism and commitment to a particular volunteer assignment. While 48 percent of the prospective volunteers thought the problems their clientele face are "individual problems, which should be addressed by personal improvements on the part of those who are suffering," only 36 percent of current volunteers agreed with this statement. Only 18 percent of prospective volunteers thought that government can do a better job of addressing their clientele's problems than can voluntary efforts, while 34 percent of current volunteers agreed with this statement. Similarly, people who had been volunteers for three or more years with one organization had far different opinions on these questions from those who had been volunteers for less than three years; among the more experienced volunteers, less than 27 percent thought the problems of their clientele were of an individual nature, as opposed to over 47 percent of the less experienced group, and the more experienced group showed 42 percent agreement that government can do a better job than volunteers, as opposed to only 25 percent of those who had volunteered less than three years. In addition, the more experienced volunteers were far less likely than the less experienced ones to agree that "the issues I work on are social problems, which people should get together to solve," and also more likely to agree that "the issues I try to address as a volunteer are social problems, which should be addressed primarily by government. There was a similar divide on these issues on the variable of "commitment";

those who volunteered more than three hours per week with one organization were far more likely to express agreement that government should play a primary role on the problems on which they work as volunteers, and were far less likely to attribute the problems to the fault of individuals.

Similarly, the amount of experience one had as a volunteer, and the amount of time one spent per week in a volunteer assignment, had a major impact on the volunteers' views on whether they thought their voluntary commitment would be as necessary if government were to do more to address the problems that affect their clientele: 41 percent of the current volunteers and 44 percent of the more experienced volunteers agreed that voluntary action would be less needed, as opposed to only 21 percent of prospective volunteers and 31 percent of less experienced volunteers. Asked whether their own voluntary activity would be less needed if government did more, 20 percent of current volunteers agreed, as opposed to only 9.8 percent of prospective volunteers, and 21 percent of the more experienced volunteers agreed, as opposed to only 13 percent of the less experienced.

Spending a large amount of time as a volunteer—in terms of both years of service and hours of service per week, appears to make a difference in the individual's perspective, especially when the volunteer stays in one organization, serving the same population of clientele over an extended period of time. One might explain the differences between those who have volunteered longer and those who have not volunteered as long as a difference that existed before they first became volunteers. While there may be some truth to this, there is reason to believe that the experience of serving as a volunteer has an educational effect. Remember, all of the volunteers in the survey work directly with their organization's

clientele. Spending time as a volunteer working with the same clientele, these volunteers are likely to gain a greater understanding of the realities of the problems that these people face. Over time, the volunteers learn that these problems are complex, and that many of the people they help have arrived at their circumstances, at least in part, for reasons that cannot be attributed to their own personal shortcomings. Over time, they also may learn that the level of need among their clientele is greater than they had thought before dealing with them first-hand, and they may thus come to realize that, while their own voluntary action is helpful, volunteerism alone is not adequate to meet their clientele's needs. They thus become less likely to state that the problem is a social problem that should be addressed by people working together, and more likely to attribute a primary role to government programs, seeing their own role as merely secondary. It follows that some will come to an understanding that much of what they do might be less necessary if government would play a greater role.

While it could still be argued that attitudinal differences between volunteers who have served a long time with a particular organization or who serve many hours a week with one organization and those who are less experienced or who show less commitment to one organization are differences that existed before the volunteers began volunteering; that the reason some have shown greater dedication to one organization has to do with a greater level of commitment which these people may have possessed prior to volunteering, there is further evidence that an educational effect of volunteering is at play. Many of the comments by program administrators as to what people who volunteer get out of it confirm that volunteering is a highly educational and sensitivity-building experience.

For example, Ralph Vogel of the Neighborhood Coalition for Shelter noted that volunteers learn about the complex reasons that people become homeless and lose some of their stereotyped images of homeless people. "It's getting more and more complex," said Mr. Vogel, and the volunteers "learn that the reasons people are becoming homeless are changing. First it was the elderly, then crack, then [people released from] mental institutions. Now it's younger people, and more working homeless." Steven Mancini of Mentoring USA noted that many volunteer mentors, becoming involved in the lives of young people, often learn about the problems they face in the educational system and of the need for improvement. "They often become acutely aware of the problems from their interactions with the child. Sometimes they learn about the needs in the schools--not enough supplies, equipment, not getting decent math education, etc. They become encouraged, when they learn about problems through their voluntary activity, to do something." Speaking of his overall experiences with volunteers in New York, Mr. Mancini added, "People of vastly different economic circumstances are living side by side in this city. A lot of people come in from the middle class, or are new to city, and through volunteering they come to understand some of the issues in their own communities. Doing the volunteering fosters empathy, sensitivity, and it helps them to really understand."

Numerous other agency administrators remarked on the educational impact of volunteering on their volunteers. "They come away with a better understanding of the people" they are serving, said Clyde Kuemmerle of the Holy Apostle Soup Kitchen. Brady Crane of Grand Central Neighborhood Services remarked that volunteers "learn that the homeless people are trying to build self-esteem." Said Kiran Gaugioso of Sponsors for

Educational Opportunity, "A lot of them will say that kids are not getting enough help. They don't say this when they first come in; it's a reaction to being with the kids and realizing how educationally deprived they are." At Learning Leaders, a lot of the volunteers are parents who get involved because they see the need for tutors from their own children's experience. But, according to Executive Director Carole Kellerman, they learn about the real extent of the problem in the course of their volunteer work, and "some get involved in the governance of their schools."

At Shelter and Food for the Homeless on the Lower East Side, volunteers learn first-hand about "the problems being caused by welfare reform. The [numbers of] people being served in the food pantry are increasing quite a bit in recent years--food stamps are more difficult to get, and some people are losing benefits." Guy Paulhinas, founder and director of We Can, related the lessons he learned from his initial volunteer experience. "I started by working at a soup kitchen. I went the first time on a lost bet." The first thing he learned was that "homeless people had difficulty redeeming cans and bottles under the new Bottle Bill, because many store owners were discouraging it." As he continued to get involved in helping homeless people, he, and other volunteers he worked with, "learned that homeless people have some admirable qualities. They have problems--drugs, mental health, etc.--but they're making it on their own."

This sort of learning can break down stereotypes that many people have about those who need assistance, and make them more open to the idea that the problems they face are not the result of personal flaws in their character, but often are external or societal problems that cannot be solved without some action by government.

Significance of The Educational Role of Volunteerism: Critics of volunteerism on the left claim that volunteerism tends to get people to focus on the situations of individuals in need, at the expense of their thinking about and acting on the need for larger political change to eradicate the systemic problems from which people in need suffer. They also argue that volunteerism provides an excuse for governmental inaction, since it creates the appearance that assistance is being provided to people in need, and that that assistance is qualitatively better than impersonal, primarily material assistance from the government.

However, it appears from my survey that human services volunteerism has precisely the opposite effect, at least upon the attitudes of the volunteers themselves. Involvement with people in need appears to result in the volunteers becoming more aware of what government is doing, or failing to do, for their clientele. It appears to result in a greater sense among the volunteers that government should do more for the people the volunteers are trying to help. It also creates in the volunteers a greater sensitivity to the complexity of the problems their clientele face, as evidenced by the inverse relationship between voluntary experience with one client population and agreement that their problems are individual problems. And the experience of volunteering appears to make volunteers aware that their own efforts, while important and helpful, are insufficient alone to fully address the problems of the people they are serving.

The educational effect of volunteerism often broadens their perspectives about the problems of people experiencing poverty, makes them more aware of the relationship between politics and government policy and the problems their clientele face, and creates the potential for volunteers to become more politically involved. The longer one has been a volunteer, and

the more time one puts into volunteering on a regular basis, the more likely the individual is to understand and to be sensitive to the complexity of the problems facing their clientele. They are also more likely to realize the limits of voluntary action, to see that volunteerism alone cannot suffice to adequately address the problems. And, the more likely they are to understand the larger issues behind the problems their clientele face, and the need for government action to address these larger issues.

Conclusion to Chapter Six. While conservative critics of “big government” are mistaken in their zero-sum game assumption that vigorous governmental attention to and action on the problems of poverty inhibits private charitable initiative to assist people in need, leftist critics of charity also make ill-conceived zero-sum game assumptions that the provision of private charity inhibits fuller and more comprehensive government welfare programs. In their argument that the existence of private charity justifies inadequate government welfare provision, that participation in the provision of direct services distracts volunteers from the need to participate in political advocacy to obtain real solutions to the problems, and by blaming charity for reinforcing and legitimizing elitism and inequality, these critics ignore the positive contributions that the existence of charity makes to their cause.

First, while some of us might prefer to see large numbers of people in a movement to address political and economic inequities that may be at the root of poverty in America, it is unrealistic to see involvement in this sort of activism and volunteerism in direct services as an either/or proposition. As one volunteer administrator indicated in Chapter Three, people get involved in volunteering to help to improve the lives of individuals (or to help individuals improve their lives) because there is a tangible cause-and-effect benefit which they can see

resulting from their volunteerism—they can deal with individual problems but simply can't get their heads around the broad and complex political issues that affect the individuals they might enjoy helping. It is through the act of volunteering to help individuals that the volunteer might learn the realities and complexities of the problems that face their client populations, learn the limitations of voluntary action, and begin to understand the need for action by government. Getting involved in helping individuals on a one-on-one basis may be the first step toward greater political awareness and, in some cases, political activism. Without the availability of the opportunity to get involved in helping people directly, many people who are now actively advocating for better government policy on poverty and related issues might instead be silent.

Thus, volunteerism is a vital aspect of civil society which builds social capital—a sense of mutual trust, a feeling of personal efficacy, a sense of neighborliness and sociability that causes people to look beyond the personal interests of themselves and their close circle of kin and friends to the broader interests of the community—that is a necessary step toward becoming involved in political advocacy.

Second, critics of charity often overlook the way that direct service organizations, as they develop and learn from experience the problems their clientele face, become active in terms of advocacy on some level—whether doing as little as helping individual clientele obtain public benefits to which they are entitled, or directly lobbying government bodies for policies that would benefit their clientele, or joining coalitions that work for broader political or policy objectives. In addition, the existence of a large number of direct services agencies with a hands-on knowledge of problems that exist serve to publicize and make the public more

aware of the problems. Charitable organizations thus create a public constituency on behalf of their clientele, and one can imagine that the situation of people who are poor would be worse without this constituency.

Finally, while charity certainly has some elitist aspects, the vast majority of people who work in charitable organizations--especially those who come in direct contact with the clientele--are not the rich and powerful. Philanthropy and volunteerism are widespread in our society, with participation of large numbers of people from all socioeconomic groups. To charge these people with contributing to the debasement of the poor is unfair, and distracts us from the fact that it is the actual disparity of condition among different economic groups, not the effort by some people to help others, that is demeaning. If anything, the learning process that occurs when people come in contact with people of drastically different life circumstances is likely to bridge the gaps between different groups in our society, promote understanding and sensitivity, and contribute to social progress.

CHAPTER EIGHT: ACTIVE GOVERNMENT, ACTIVE COMMUNITIES: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE BROADER DISCUSSION OF CIVIL SOCIETY

In the 1980s and 1990s, conservative Republican politicians have achieved electoral success by casting their main dispute with Democrats as an argument over the size of government, and they have given this argument a populist air by appealing to two seemingly contradictory ideals.

The first of these ideals is personal freedom. For a long time, the cause of individual autonomy was identified with liberals, and was central to the populist appeal of liberalism. Liberals called on the federal government to take action to protect and enhance personal freedom: to ensure and enforce civil rights, to protect abortion rights, to protect the right to unionize and the rights of workers to safety and fair treatment, to protect the rights of consumers, to protect the right of people to a healthy environment, etc. The government needed to be enlisted to protect individual liberties from abridgement by states and localities and from incursions by big business.

In recent years, conservatives have managed to turn these populist causes on their head by playing on a nebulous fear of an increasingly intrusive, and potentially tyrannical, central government in Washington. The fundamental argument of conservatives was once that the free hand of the market will result in the best outcomes for all Americans, a message with limited appeal. While this is still a central conservative tenet, conservative rhetoric has

increasingly combined this argument with a new vision of rights that competes with the liberal vision: instead of protecting our rights against incursions by corporations and state and local governments, they present the federal government as the main source of incursions against our rights, against our freedom of choice as individuals. Government tells us that we have to register guns, that we can't cut down trees on our own property for the sake of an endangered owl, that we are forced to support government welfare programs instead of being allowed to decide for ourselves what causes we want to support with our own money. If we want to start a business, we have to adhere to rules governing every minutia of what we do—from providing expensive accommodations to people with disabilities to providing workers with family leave, to enforcing no-smoking policies in our establishments. Similarly, income tax is framed as a form of oppression, a violation of the right to decide for ourselves how to use our money. (As one right-wing commentator eloquently put it, "Al Gore is against freedom. He is against freedom because he knows that the more freedom you have, the less power Al and his pals have. That's why [he says that] tax cuts are a 'risky scheme.'"¹³⁷)

At the same time, conservative leaders have convinced many among us that "big government" impedes our ability in our states and communities to enforce rules that encourage responsible behavior by individuals. We can't have the Ten Commandments on the classroom wall, or have prayer in our schools, or prevent what we consider to be immoral magazines, records and movies from appearing in our stores and theaters. Our state

137 Rush Limbaugh on *The Rush Limbaugh Show*, January 25, 2000

governments can't outlaw abortion. And, until we got rid of the old welfare program, our state and local governments couldn't force parents to work and set a good example for their children instead of living off the public dole.

The second ideal to which many of today's conservatives appeal is that of the rights of communities to determine their own social lives and to enforce standards of personal conduct and responsibility; in essence, it is asserted that the "Washington establishment" has continually sided with those who want to escape the rules and standards of behavior and morality which are imposed by communities, with the result of increasing moral and social anarchy. Conservatives have managed to depict the federal government as a source of support for those who want to escape the norms and standards that have traditionally been set by communities--providing economic support for those who deviate from the norm of working for a living, protecting gay people and others perceived as deviants from social sanctions within their community, preventing communities from determining their own standards for pollution and housing conditions and education and a host of other aspects of the lives of their communities.

To many conservatives, the crux of most of the major problems in American society are consequences of centralized government telling individuals what they can't do in their own lives and on their own property, as well as preventing communities from making their own rules to maintain a reasonable moral code to ensure a civilized society.

In the 2000 presidential election season, these sentiments could be heard in the Republican debates. They could be heard in the rhetoric of a Christian conservative candidate like Alan Keyes, who asserts that "the fundamental premise of liberalism is the

moral incapacity of the American people,"¹³⁸ going on to state that government rules and regulation are the consequence of elite mistrust of the people to make the right decisions for themselves. Steve Forbes spoke on the same theme in his argument for private Social Security accounts--that government should stop assuming that people can't make decisions on matters such as investment on their own.

Although these candidates for the nomination did not succeed, indicating that perhaps their arguments did not appeal to a large section of the public, it is not just these most right-wing candidates who warned us about government tyranny. These warnings were also incorporated into the message of the winner of the nomination, the relatively mainstream George W. Bush. Like those on the far right, Bush bemoaned the "unprecedented growth in the federal government and unprecedented decay in the American culture" which "coincided and fed on each other in a way that brought us to where we are today." Where we are is in a "cultural crisis," in which "the lines have blurred between right and wrong," in which we have gone from "accepting responsibility to assigning blame." Big government has fostered "dependency and laziness" and has made us "a nation of victims." "The decline of individual responsibility created a huge void. If people no longer were responsible for their neighbors or even themselves, then who was? Into that void stepped the government."¹³⁹ Bush implies that isolation and lack of caring and responsibility for one another has provided a space into which we have accepted the involvement of government,

138 Alan Keyes, speech to Christian Coalition Dinner, February 6, 1999, alankeyes.com.

139 George W. Bush, speech at Schreiner College in Kerrville, Texas, April 10, 1996

and that, as Alexis De Tocqueville predicted over a century—and-a-half ago, government has become “an immense, protective power which is alone responsible for securing men's enjoyment and watching over their fate” and keeping them “in perpetual childhood,” making “the exercise of free choice less useful and rarer” and “little by little robbing each citizen of the proper use of his own faculties.” Deriding the “failed compassion of towering, distant bureaucracies,” Bush called for “compassionate conservatism”, for turning to our wealth of voluntary and religious institutions to deal with our major social problems. He promised to “rally the armies of compassion in our communities to fight a very different war against poverty and hopelessness, a daily battle waged house to house and heart by heart.”¹⁴⁰ He planned to “energize private action” by devolving resources to “charities and neighborhood healers who need them most.” He planned to “encourage an outpouring of giving” by expanding the federal charitable deduction to non-itemizers and promoting a charitable state tax credit. He proposed to allow religious-based organizations to receive government contracts, and to encourage the creation of faith-based drug treatment programs, prison ministries, and “second chance maternity homes,” among other programs.¹⁴¹ He planned a reinvigoration of civil society.

“In the past,” Bush stated, “presidents have declared wars on poverty and promised to create a great society. But these grand gestures and honorable aims were frustrated. They have become a warning, not an example. We found that government can spend money, but

140 George W. Bush, from speech in Indianapolis, July 22, 1999, published on Bush campaign web site, p. 81.

141. Bush, 7/22/99, p. 96-97.

it can't put hope in our hearts or a sense of purpose in our lives. This is done by churches and synagogues and mosques and charities that warm the cold of life. A quiet river of goodness and kindness that cuts through stone."¹⁴²

Bush, like his more conservative opponents, was appealing to a sense that people are yearning for a greater sense of community, to a sense that big government has displaced community and that we are instead facing the "threat of our lives", that of being increasingly controlled by a "distant, towering bureaucracy." There is ultimately a tinge to the conservative argument that says that we have thus become increasingly endangered by the specter of a direct relationship between the people and the central government that circumvents the institutions of community which have always served as a bulwark against government becoming overly intrusive in our lives, and that we are ultimately in danger of building a too powerful and even tyrannical central government. Conservatives have found a way to weld this into a populist appeal--running as outsiders to the "Washington Establishment."

This conservative argument is another example of "zero-sum" thinking. It reflects the notion that when government does too much--even if it is merely an effort to help people out who are in need--it preempts community action, not only by local governments, but by non-governmental institutions that exist within communities. As Nathan Glazer has put it, every social policy "substitutes for some traditional arrangement...a new arrangement in which public authorities take over, at least in part, the role of the family, of the ethnic and

142 Bush, 7/22/99, p. 81.

neighborhood group, of voluntary associations."¹⁴³ Government action enervates the community, and getting government out of the way is central to reviving communities, giving them back their ability to govern themselves, to make their own decisions, to enforce norms and to provide for the needs of their people in a better and more responsive way than can the distant federal government. In other words, the more we depend on government, the less "civil society" we will have, and the less civil society we have, the less of a bulwark we have against an overly intrusive and potentially oppressive government.

Rallying Around "Civil Society"

Conservatives are thus "rallying around" the "notion of civil society as an alternative to extra-local government."¹⁴⁴ The conservative message mirrors, draws upon, and perhaps to some extent has even grown out of the discussion in scholarly circles over the importance of "civil society" and "social capital" to a well-working democracy which has been all the rage in political science in the 1990s. Robert Putnam called our attention to this issue in his 1993 book about the relationship between a strong associational life and accountable and responsive government in Italy. Putnam tracked the relative success of the regional governments that were set up in Italy in the early 1970's, finding that some were far more responsive and accountable to the citizens they were created to serve, and thus became much

143 Glazer, p. 7-8.

144 Skocpol, "Unraveling From Above," *The American Prospect*, March-April 1996, p. 20-25.

more efficient and effective than others at answering the needs of their constituents and communities.

The main factor that determined whether a region would have a more or less successful government was whether, historically, the region had built large stocks of "social capital," which can only be developed, according to Putnam, where there is a tradition of strong "horizontal" ties among the people, from choral societies and sports clubs to neighborhood associations and mass-based parties. Through these grassroots associations, people develop the elements of social capital, such as "trust, norms, and networks" and "high levels of cooperation, trust, reciprocity, civic engagement, and collective well-being."¹⁴⁵ As opposed to regions in which most of the social relations among people are more "vertical" or authoritarian in nature, regions with strong horizontal ties among the people are capable of working together to achieve collective goals because the level of trust that develops and the strong value people place on acceptance by their fellow citizens enables the community to overcome the "free-rider problem", helping to ensure that people will not shirk their responsibilities toward the collectivity. In addition, in areas where there are strong horizontal ties, people experience greater equality, having a voice in the affairs of the groups in which they participate, and thus develop a greater sense of efficacy and confidence that they can play an effective role in helping to determine the decisions made by the groups to which they belong.

In a region or community with a tradition of strong horizontal relationships, the

145 Robert D. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work; Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*, (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 177

government will, to some degree, mirror this style of social relations, with a less hierarchical, authoritarian, and rigid internal structure. The government will be more flexible and open to change. Perhaps more important, because the people will be used to cooperating together and will have developed a high degree of efficacy, they will participate more in politics, and work together to push popular causes and issues, and thus the government will have to be more accountable and responsive to the public, and will be under greater pressure to do a satisfactory job of delivering needed services. Thus "building social capital...is the key to making democracy work."¹⁴⁶

Having concluded that "the norms and networks of civic engagement ...powerfully affect the performance of representative government,"¹⁴⁷ Putnam later turned his attention to the United States, warning us that "the vibrancy of American civil society has notably declined over the past several decades," and that this trend threatens our ability to maintain a vibrant democracy in which many people participate and the government is responsible and accountable to the people. Putnam noted that dramatic declines in voting rates and participation in public meetings on local affairs, as well as a rise in the number of people who respond to polls that they trust the government in Washington only "some of the time" or "almost never" from 30 percent in 1966 to 75 percent in 1992, were accompanied by dramatic declines in participation in the formal and informal institutions of civil society. He observed, based on answers to questions on the General Social Survey, that the number of

146 Putnam, p. 185

147 Putnam, "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital," *Journal of Democracy*, 6:1, January 1995, p. 65-78.

people in labor unions had dropped from 32.5 percent in 1953 to 15.8 percent in 1992, that participation in parent-teacher associations had fallen from 12 million people in 1964 to 7 million in 1992, that membership in the League of Women Voters had dropped by 42 percent since 1969, that volunteerism in mainline civic organizations such as the Boy Scouts and the Red Cross had decreased by 26 percent and 61 percent respectively since 1970, that membership in fraternal organizations had also declined, and that even membership in bowling leagues had plunged by 40 percent between 1980 and 1993. Informal indicators of social capital had also declined. The number of people who report having socialized with neighbors more than once a year had steadily declined over two decades, as had the number of people who said that most people can be trusted. Putnam also cited the "loosening of bonds within the family" as evidence of reduced social capital. The implication is that the solution to many of our social problems, and to the deterioration of participation in politics which keeps democracy strong, lies in the strengthening and rebuilding of local organizations that represent civil society.

In the wake of Putnam's findings, scholars began to debate over the question of the relationship between social capital and good government, and over the evidence as to whether there has really been a decline in civil society, or whether old forms of social capital are simply being replaced by alternative forms of social capital which Putnam simply fails to appreciate--from cyberspace to mutual support groups, to national membership organizations such as the Sierra Club and the Association for the Advancement of Retired People, to even the rising number of restaurants in this country--and whether these alternative forms are an adequate replacement for the old forms of more locally based and

interpersonal participation. Theda Skocpol has entered the fray, warning us not to draw too hasty conclusions from Putnam's argument; while she accepts that there has been a decline in "social capital," she argues that voluntary associations are usually built from top-down, that civic vitality has "depended on vibrant ties across classes and localities," that elite groups have abandoned these ties and their commitment to voluntary organizations, and that rebuilding civil society will require privileged Americans to again "join their fellow citizens in broad civic endeavors." She warns that "re-establishing local voluntary groups alone will not suffice."¹⁴⁸

Government and Civil Society as Opposing Values. The studies and findings of social scientists are often too esoteric and obscure to make their way into the public discussion of politics. However, with its romantic notions of community, the discussion raised by Putnam has managed to seep, at least to some degree, into public consciousness and into the consciousness of politicians who are attempting to appeal to the public. Civil society is not a new topic in political science; it has been the subject of many political theorists, going back to the time of Alexis De Tocqueville (although theorists in previous generations have used different terms for what we now call "civil society"), but Putnam's genius and uniqueness has been to give us empirical evidence of the importance of strong institutions of civil society and to measure in tangible ways the health of our civil society. Perhaps because he is not writing in the direct aftermath of negative upheavals in our times,

148 Skocpol, "Unraveling from Above," *The American Prospect*, March-April 1996, p. 20-25.

as did Robert Nisbet and Hannah Arendt and several others in the aftermath of World War II, he expresses his points in calmer and less urgent tones than these theorists. Yet his ideas have in many ways resonated with the American people in a way that the work of few scholars does.

Thanks in no small part to the work of Putnam, the ideas of Tocqueville and his progeny, which Putnam has revived, have been released from the ivory towers and lifted from the shelves of academic libraries and has been given a place in American politics. No, Tocqueville is not mentioned in the tabloids and on the local news, and is not in the vocabulary of the average person in the street—but his arguments have seeped into the popular consciousness from mainstream intellectual circles, where significant numbers of people reside. Today, Tocqueville is the subject of a variety of web sites, C-Span made following his trail and revisiting his observations about our society the subject of a year's worth of programming, and you can find Tocqueville quoted by pundits in newspaper columns and in mainstream political magazines. No, Tocqueville has not reached mass consciousness *per se*, but he has reached the consciousness of the think tanks, the politicians, and the pundits, and through them, Tocquevillian sentiments have reached a public that has become increasingly concerned that we have become overly dependent on “big government” to solve our problems, resulting in a loss of freedom. Newt Gingrich expressed these sentiments after the conservative Republican sweep of Congress in 1994: “We are trying to reestablish the American value of individual liberty and the citizens' first claim to their own money....in the long run, the strength of a free society is the commitment of every person to solve real problems and bear real responsibilities....If we refuse to grant this freedom, we

drain a free society of its human strength."¹⁴⁹

Unfortunately, in the translation from the scholarly world to the "real world" of politics and political rhetoric, half of Putnam's argument has been lost. For, while Putnam was arguing for the importance of a vigorous civil society, he gave indications that civil society is not just a bulwark against government oppression, but also a force for a robust government that is responsive to the public and works actively toward achieving the public good. But the current conservative embrace of civil society neglects the latter half of this argument, focusing solely on the civil society in opposition to big government, and presenting these as mutually exclusive values.

In this sense, even though Putnam may have inspired current public discussions related to civil society, the conservative argument for strengthening civil society resembles Putnam's predecessors more than Putnam himself, ignoring the part of Putnam's argument that sees a strong civil society and a government that works strongly in the interests of the people as complementing each other and instead focusing exclusively on the Tocquevillian idea that we need a strong civil society as a counterbalance to big government.

For Tocqueville, a society needed a rich associational life in order to avoid tyranny. Tocqueville saw the terror following the French revolution as the consequence of a radical individualism which destroyed traditional institutions of kinship, faith, and community. These institutions had created a structure to society, given people the security of knowing

149 Newt Gingrich, *To Renew America*, p. 112-13.

their place, and performed a vital role in the lives of their members.¹⁵⁰ With the breakdown of these institutions, people were left as equal, isolated individuals without a sense of community and interdependence, in narrow pursuit of their individual well being. In the absence of small substructures within which we look to each other for mutual benefit, we come to depend too much on a centralized government to provide our needs. Consequently, the government will gradually and inevitably cover "the whole of social life with a network of petty, complicated rules that are both minute and uniform...so that in the end" we become "no more than a flock of timid and hardworking animals with the government as its shepherd."¹⁵¹ The effect is to replace local self-government with "an immense, protective power which is alone responsible for securing men's enjoyment and watching over their fate" and which would "keep them in perpetual childhood." It would make "the exercise of free choice less useful and rarer, restrict the activity of free will within a narrower compass, and little by little rob each citizen of the proper use of his own faculties."

In the 1830s America which Tocqueville observed, the people avoided this "quiet form of tyranny" by preventing the country from becoming overly centralized, and this was owed in no small measure to the rich bounty of associational life in America. Tocqueville wrote, "Nothing...is more deserving of our attention than the intellectual and moral

9. Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1955) p. 167

151 Tocqueville, *opp. cit.*, locate page.

associations of America."¹⁵² "No sooner does a government attempt to go beyond its political sphere and to enter on a new track than it exercises, even unintentionally, an insupportable tyranny; for a government can only dictate strict rules, and it is never easy to discriminate between its advice and its commands."¹⁵³ Thus, the American people's habit of forming private associations is essential to this country's ability to maintain liberty with democracy, because it enables the people to depend on each other instead of depending on government. "Governments...should not be the only active powers." Private associations also foster a feeling of connectedness to community, efficacy, equality with our fellows, and confidence that enables us to hold government accountable, keep it in check, and prevent oppression. In contrast to Europeans, who look too much toward the center for the provision of services and rules of conduct, Americans are neighborly, self-reliant, and vigorous in working together to solve problems. We do for ourselves, help each other, work to improve our communities by our own initiative, and--in the language of today--build "social capital." And there is an interdependence between small and decentralized government and the strength of our civil society--our Constitution, by setting limits on what government can do, provides space for people to do for themselves and for each other through private associationalism; and our high degree of associationalism prevents us from taking the dangerous step toward tyranny of asking government to come in and take care of our needs.

This strain of thought about the bulwark against tyranny which civil society provides

11 Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), p. 118.

153 Ibid, p. 117.

was very important to several mid-20th Century political theorists who rued the loss of this Tocquevillian utopia and the resultant alienation and isolation of individuals, citing this as a major cause of the enthusiastic approval and submission to totalitarianism by millions of people in Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Soviet Union, and to their willing participation in the brutal destruction of millions of lives. Robert A. Nisbet, for example, wrote that totalitarianism results in part from the detachment, isolation, and alienation people feel with the loss of substructures within the larger society and its replacement by mass society, the loss of meaningful associations within which people can find a sense of community in smaller groups in which they can find protection and feel they make a difference. This "atomization of all social and cultural relationships within which human beings gain their normal sense of membership in society" renders the public an undifferentiated "mass." The mass is "an aggregate of individuals who are insecure, basically lonely, and ground down, either through decree or historical circumstance, into mere particles of social dust. Within the mass all ordinary relationships and authorities seem devoid of institutional function and psychological meaning,"¹⁵⁴ and a sense of security is replaced by a sense of despair. "The atomization of old values and associations does not leave for long an associational vacuum. The genius of totalitarian leadership lies in its profound awareness that human personality cannot tolerate moral isolation. It lies, further, in its knowledge that absolute and relentless power will be acceptable only when it comes to seem the only available form of community

154 Robert A. Nisbet, *The Quest for Community*, Oxford, 1953), p. 198-199.

and membership."¹⁵⁵ And, "the most shocking acts of totalitarianism become manifest--not in its attitude toward the already existing masses, but toward those human beings, still closely related by village, church, or family, or labor union, and whose very relationships separate them from the indispensable condition of massdom. Such relationships must be ruthlessly destroyed,"¹⁵⁶ resulting in mass torture and killing, the removal of large segments of the population to labor camps, and other brutal acts.

Nisbet warns us to avoid a situation in which there is an "absolute identity of State and society--nothing outside the State, everything in the State," against a society in which "the basic needs for education, recreation, welfare, economic production, distribution, and consumption, health, spiritual and physical, and all other services of society are made aspects of the administrative structure of political government."¹⁵⁷ He urges us to maintain a society in which "the state is inherently pluralist and, whatever the intentions of its formal political rulers, its power will be limited by associations whose plurality of claims upon their members is the measure of their members' freedom from any monopoly of power in society."¹⁵⁸

Hannah Arendt was also concerned with the alienation that is the consequence of a mass society in which, "the realm of the social has finally, after several centuries of development, reached the point where it embraces and controls all members of a given

155 Nisbet, p. 204

156 Nisbet, p. 200

157 Nisbet, p. 282

158 Nisbet, p. 284

community equally and with equal strength,¹⁵⁹ in which there is no distinctly public realm in which people think about the common good rather than the necessities of their own well being. We are thus a mass of isolated individuals who are “more likely to behave and less likely to tolerate non-behavior” and who “develop an almost irresistible inclination toward despotism, be this the despotism of a person or of majority rule.”¹⁶⁰

In all of these conceptions, government and the mediating institutions of civil society are forces in tension with each other. The bigger government gets, the more it breaks down the institutions of civil society, and the weaker are the institutions of civil society, the bigger and stronger government becomes. As Gertrude Himmelfarb puts it, “The welfare state is a classic case of the appropriation by government of the functions traditionally performed by families and localities. Neighbors feel no obligation to help one another when they can call upon the government for assistance.”¹⁶¹ Adds William A. Schambra, big government has “drained the strength and moral authority from local community institutions...,” with a campaign to “eradicate civic institutions” which has been “a bedrock of twentieth-century elite discourse.”¹⁶² And because active government social policy tends to eradicate civic institutions, we have been losing what distinguishes our country, and our level of freedom and community control, from other countries--an unusually extensive and strong set of

159 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, (University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 41

160 Arendt, p. 43

161 Gertrude Himmelfarb, “Second Thoughts on Civil Society”, in E.J. Dionne, *Community Works*, (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1998), p. 118.

162 William A. Schambra, “All Community is Local,” in Dionne, p. 46.

private institutions of civil society. The weakening of civil society inevitably results in more government and less freedom, and the growth of government inevitably weakens civil society.

A Liberal View of the Relationship between Government and Civil Society.

During the 1950s, it was not only conservatives like Arendt and Nisbet who were concerned about civil society. On the left, C. Wright Mills expressed a very similar set of concerns, observing that we were increasingly become a "mass society." Democracy requires a "community of publics," in which people are able to create structures and institutions--or private associations-- in which many people can participate in the shaping of public opinion. In a true community of publics, "virtually as many people express opinions as receive them. Public communications are so organized that there is a chance immediately and effectively to answer back any opinion expressed in public. Opinion formed by such discussion readily finds an outlet in effective action, even against--if necessary--the prevailing system of authority. And authoritative institutions do not penetrate the public, which is more or less autonomous in its operations."¹⁶³ While acknowledging that we have never had a perfect community of publics, Mills laments that we are increasingly becoming less a community of publics and more a "mass society." In a mass society, "far fewer people express opinions than receive them; for the community of publics becomes an abstract collection of individuals who receive impressions from the mass media. The communications that prevail are so organized that it is difficult or impossible for the

163 C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite*, (Oxford, New York, 1956), p. 303-304.

individual to answer back immediately or with any effect. The realization of opinion in action is controlled by authorities who organize and control the channels of such action. The mass has no autonomy from institutions; on the contrary, agents of authorized institutions penetrate this mass, reducing any autonomy it may have in the formation of opinion by discussion."¹⁶⁴

Mills' fear, like that of Nisbet, is that when the population becomes a shapeless mass instead of a public, the people become isolated and alienated from each other: "Sunk in their routines, they do not transcend, even by discussion, much less by action, their more or less narrow lives."¹⁶⁵ We are increasingly endangered by the threat of totalitarianism, as "the top of modern American society is increasingly unified...at the top there has emerged an elite power," while "the bottom of this society is politically fragmented, and even as a passive fact, increasingly powerless...."¹⁶⁶

Unlike conservatives, who see the potential source of a tyrannical government in the gradual growth of government, and who perceive of the mediating institutions of civil society simply as a counterweight against government power, Mills recognized that the power of government always exists to be used by those who have the wherewithal to make that power serve their purposes. Therefore, the purpose of a "community of publics" is to connect the people to the center of power, to enable them to have a strong voice to ensure

164 Mills, p. 304.

165 Mills, p. 320.

166 Mills, p. 324.

government will respond to their interests rather than to the interests of the power elite. Mills thus decries the "absence of voluntary associations that really connect the public at large with the center of power."¹⁶⁷ Similarly, today, Benjamin R. Barber argues that the purpose of civil society is to ensure that the power of government is used in the interest of the people rather than in the interest of the few who hold economic power; that without civil society, a vacuum of power is created that is filled by the rich and powerful. "Without civil society," writes Barber, citizens are suspended between big bureaucratic governments they no longer trust and private markets they cannot depend on for moral and civic values....In the absence of a vibrant and pluralistic civil society, formal democratic institutions atrophy,"¹⁶⁸ and respond more to the powerful voice of the business community than to the public at large.

The issue of totalitarianism is further complicated by the possibility that government is not the only institution that exerts significant power in our society. The business community is capable of setting the rules by which we spend a significant portion of our lives as workers; creating authoritarian workplace environments; determining the fate of thousands of workers at a time by downsizing or cutting benefits; and using the development of a global economy as an opportunity to hire cheaper labor overseas, and to change the very terms of work, leaving millions of people adrift in the "contingent" work force. Business appears to be increasingly diverting government policies from the public interest to corporate interests of business by making huge contributions of "soft money." Business

167 Mills, p. 324.

34 Benjamin D. Barber, "More Democracy, More Revolution," *The Nation*, 10/26/98.

exercises a great deal of control over the media--not only in the sense of ownership, but in terms of its ability to "veto" programming it finds may be too controversial or that might not put viewers in the mood to listen receptively to advertisements and commercials.

Indeed, while we rightly fear governmental intrusion into our lives, big business is capable of much the same. We are aware that totalitarian governments attempt to inhabit every moment of the life of the individual, to the point where pictures of a Saddam Hussein or a Mao Tse Tung are omnipresent. But big business can have a similar ability to reach into our lives to the point where it seems we are being brainwashed by the consumer ideology they wish to instill in us. As commentators from Herbert Marcuse to Michael Parenti have noted, the constant barrage of advertising that the populace receives from cradle to grave affects the way we see the world, turning life into a series of choices between products and conflating both social status and personal fulfillment with having the means to obtain material goods. Today, advertising is substantially more omnipresent than it was in the 1960s and 1970s, when these commentators wrote--advertising has crept into every aspect of our lives. It is no longer enough for advertisers to make you watch their commercials between innings of a ballgame; today, you see an ad for a product over the catcher's shoulder on every pitch, and the starting lineups are now the Budweiser Starting Lineups. Today, kids play basketball on playground courts with ads on the backboards, and municipal buses are covered with ads. And millions of people have today been made into walking advertisements for corporations, wearing the Nike swoosh on their caps and all sort of other corporate logos on their clothing. Life, it seems, has become one long series of advertisements.

And, as megamergers continue to centralize ownership of the media, our sources of information continue to shrink at the same time as the number of media outlets appears to be exploding. No matter how many television channels and web sites may exist, they are owned by an ever-shortening list of giant corporations that control the content of our news and entertainment.

This enormous unelected power needs to be controlled as much as does “big government,” but often the only recourse we have against this power is to call on “big government” to do something about it—and it is thus the role of the institutions of civil society or “communities of publics” to be a place where people can gather the intangible resources that make up “social capital”, that give the public the wherewithal to call on government to do what needs to be done to check these other sources of power.

The importance of civil society, then, is not merely to prevent too much dependency on government and to thus check the growth of government. It is also to ensure that government serves the interests of the public and protects our rights when there are infringements upon them from other sources of power. The institutions of civil society provide resources not only to enable people to not be dependent on government, but also the resources that enable people to call upon government to take positive action, and, in a way, this means that a strong and vibrant civil society can be a contributor to a strong and vibrant government. What really matters, then, is not how “big” and powerful the federal government is, but to whom it is accountable, how democratically it is chosen, whether it is responsive to the needs and demands of the people, whether it serves as a defense against other institutional sources of potential tyranny, and whether it serves as an adequate bulwark

to protect the rights of minorities. The more people who are organized, the more demands government is pressured to respond to. So we cannot assume that the role of government shrinks in the presence of a vigorous civil society; government is instead likely instead to grow.

This brings us back to Robert Putnam. Many commentators have missed the point Putnam is making. Unlike Tocqueville and Nisbet, his research does not conclude that a strong associational life simply acts to prevent people from becoming too dependent on centralized government and leads them to invite totalitarianism. This is not his sole, or even his primary concern. Instead, Putnam's concern is that a strong civil society is vital to producing a government that is responsive to the public and that has the resources and motivation to perform actively in meeting the needs of the people. His finding in Italy was that a rich tradition of "horizontal" ties among people through all sorts of formal and informal associations and networks builds mutual trust and cooperation, as well as a sense of self-confidence and efficacy. These aspects of "social capital" empower the people to overcome "collective action" problems to work together to ensure that the government will act in their interests. Strong associationalism does not simply empower the majority. Because life in a rich civic environment is highly pluralistic, minorities, as well as the majority, are empowered to voice their interests and to force the government to answer to their needs and to protect their rights as well. In other words, a strong civil society produces demands upon government. The government in this environment is likely to be bigger and more active than the government in a region without a rich associational life. Note that the independent variable in *Making Democracy Work*, government performance, is measured

in part by the breadth of government's statistical and information facilities, funding of day care centers and family clinics, economic planning and publicly funded job-training programs, housing and urban development, and bureaucratic responsiveness.¹⁶⁹

Similarly, Putnam's main concern with a decline in institutions of civil society in the United States is not that government will grow into a huge tyrannical monster without a strong civil society. Instead, his concern is that, if people become less interconnected and have fewer horizontal ties, they will gradually become too isolated to work together to ensure that government is responsive to them and robust enough to supply the collective goods demanded by the people. Without the people providing an active voice in what government does, government is likely to become less accountable to the needs and desires of the people, less interested in the rights of minorities, more corrupt, and more responsive to those groups that are left with the organizational resources to get government to act in their interests--the wealthy and the leaders of industry.

Under less pressure to regulate business in the interests of the environment, consumer safety, worker safety; with fewer demands to private services; with less expression from minorities of the need for rules and structures to protect their rights, government is likely to shrink. In other words, a dearth of institutions of civil society will lead to a less active public, which will in turn lead to a smaller, less responsive, and less democratic government. That is why Putnam is so concerned with the health of civil society.

As Putnam points out, the 1990-91 World Values Survey of nineteen member

169 Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, op. cit., p. 67-73.

countries of the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development found that social trust and group membership are positively correlated with the size of the welfare state.¹⁷⁰ Of course, these statistics do not tell us anything about causality--we do not know whether social connectedness encourages welfare spending, or whether the welfare state fosters civic engagement. But, concludes Putnam, this finding "is not easily reconciled with the notion that big government undermines social capital."¹⁷¹

In other words, "big government" and "big citizenship" are far from mutually exclusive. The more people are involved together in organizations, both formal and informal, from recreational to charitable, the more likely they are to discover from their communal experiences problems that exist that are too large to ameliorate at the level of the individual or the organization. Building cooperation and social trust, these people are likely to be the roots of larger organizations, or corroborations of organizations formed to demand constructive action on these problems from government. People are more likely to turn to government for constructive action under conditions of strong civic ties. And what government does is likely to increase, not decrease under such circumstances.

Governmental Leadership and Civil Society. While strong institutions of civil society might result in more, rather than less, active government, my study has shown it is possible that this relationship goes two ways--government activism can lead to a stronger

170 Robert A. Putnam, *The Strange Disappearance of Civic America*, American Prospect, no. 24 (Winter 1996).

171 Putnam, *ibid.*

and more vigorous civil society. Government policies, and the political rhetoric that surround them, communicate messages to society beyond the direct intentions and effects of the policies. They can reflect, and help to generate, a public mood of civic involvement or of isolationist individualism.

To the extent that the public chooses its government, an activist government with a robust agenda of policies to address problems that exist reflects a public that is in a civic mood. Government must take action against poverty, pass environmental laws, improve the quality of public education, and take on a host of other issues when the public expresses a high degree of concern for the society beyond their own self-interests and the well-being of their close circles of family and friends. This indicates that a vigorous civil society promotes a vigorous government agenda.

But politicians and governmental actors do not only follow public opinion, they lead public opinion. More than merely persuade people, they can, through activism on a variety of issues and problems, foster a public sense that the problems being addressed are social in nature, that they are problems for which we all share responsibility. When they fail to address issues, or indicate that the people affected by those problems are on their own to solve them, they foster a mood in which people are likely to feel that the problems are individual in nature, and therefore feel that they, as members of society, do not really share a responsibility to get involved. The effect that government has on us may go even further, affecting our very sense of being involved together in a society or of being individuals responsible for our own well being. And this may go beyond effecting our willingness to get involved in the solving of social problems to our very sense of sociability.

Using volunteerism and philanthropy in the area of human services, or to assist people in need, as a surrogate for civil society in general, I have tried to show in this study how these relationships may play out. First, in my study of volunteers in New York City, I found that my sample of volunteers tended to have in common a sense of identification with, and empathy for, the people they were trying to assist. They tended to reflect an extended scope of social connectedness, a sense that the people they were helping were essentially like themselves, and an ability to identify their own well-being with the well-being of those they were trying to help. Many of the volunteers were quick to attribute their decision to volunteer to a desire to help others and to add a statement about the self-fulfilling qualities inherent in helping others--people who volunteer are often people who are able to fulfill themselves by helping others because they define those others as being very much like themselves--they identify them as a "we" rather than as a "them," and are thus able to feel true empathy for those others. People help people whom they identify as sharing some commonality with them, with those whom they feel a sense of "we-ness." To the extent that government policies and political rhetoric can communicate a message that society is not responsible for the conditions of those who are poor, and that the poor are largely responsible for their own conditions because of personal failings--irresponsibility, dependence, laziness, etc--government actions and the rhetoric of political actors can affect this sense of "we-ness" by defining those who are as poor as being "others," different in some fundamental way from the population of potential helpers, and can thus dampen the desire of those potential helpers to take the initiative to get involved.

Although extended historical data measuring the level of volunteerism is not

available, we can find indications of this phenomenon at play when we look at private philanthropy in a historical context. Over the past half century, patterns in the level of private giving to charity have generally followed patterns in the health of the economy. In good times, giving has grown at a rapid pace regardless of government social welfare policy (although perhaps giving has grown a bit more impressively when government compassion, reflected in the increase in spending on social welfare, was higher). However, there have been periods in which there have been major changes in the trend line of private philanthropy, especially in the specific area of contributions to human services organizations with primarily poor clientele, that were clearly not caused by changes in the direction of the economy. As I have shown, giving experienced a sudden drop in 1980, during a presidential campaign year in which the welfare system was under attack and greater personal responsibility and individual effort were being presented as keys to recovering from the economic setbacks that the country had been undergoing for a decade. In 1994, a year when the economy was in the midst of a recovery, and following a year of major increases in private philanthropy, giving suddenly took a sharp drop, and giving to human services charities bore the brunt of this decline. This also happened to be a year in which there was a Republican revolution in both houses of Congress, and in which the political campaign featured an attack on welfare and a great deal of negative rhetoric about poor people. While private giving recovered in 1996 and 1997, zooming to new heights, giving to human services organizations was left out of this prosperity. The passage of the Personal Responsibility Act of 1996, and the political rhetoric that surrounded it, communicated a message to the public that poverty was an individual problem, the fault and responsibility

of those who were suffering. Apparently, this message dampened public enthusiasm for assisting the poor, even at a time when private giving in general was growing at a record pace in a strong economic environment.

Furthermore, when we compare levels of private charity among the 50 states with the states' levels of expenditures on public welfare, we find that low levels of public welfare provision are highly correlated with relatively small private charitable communities, while generous public welfare provision highly correlates with large numbers of charities, especially in the specific area of human services, a relationship that holds regardless of the economic conditions with the state. And states within a region tend to cling to a singular pattern on both public welfare and private charity, regardless of economic factors. This pattern indicates that public welfare provision and private charitable efforts both tend to be attributes of cultural attitudes toward the poor and toward poverty that have grown out of the differing histories of the regions.

It appears, then, that when government sets an example for society by communicating that a problem or group of problems is a societal responsibility--an example it sets by taking action on behalf of the society which it represents--more people, as members of society, are likely to feel it is worthwhile to do something in their own lives to participate in the effort to address the problem.

When government says, through its actions, "this is an important problem which we must do something about," a certain number of people will be inspired to participate; but if government says through its actions, "those people are on their own," a certain number of people will accept this message, or at least feel justified in not participating in helping those

people.

While this is a statement about the relationship between government activism and private voluntary activity on a particular set of problems, it is possible to see how the logic of this relationship might apply to a larger relationship between the general philosophy fostered by government actions and political rhetoric and civil society at large. Volunteerism and philanthropy in charitable causes is only one aspect of civil society. Civil society includes a wide array of formal and informal institutions. It is actually a quite nebulous term--depending on the writer, it might include charitable organizations, public advocacy groups, and Parents Teachers Association to the little league, the bowling league, the family, or even the neighborhood cafe or the corner bar. But however we precisely define what the institutions civil society are, can what government does be a factor in encouraging or dampening involvement in all of these sorts of institutions and others as well?

The lessons of this study on the relationship between government activism and voluntary action should raise suspicions that, indeed, government action or the lack of it, as well as political rhetoric, is one of the factors that affects the public mood in general. But beyond that, it should strike scholars of civil society that government can contribute to the demise of civil society by inaction as well as by action. The failure of government to act in a wide range of areas allows for the decimation of civil society.

For example, public safety is a vital condition for a vigorous civil society. People who are afraid to go out during after work hours are likely to be less active citizens. High levels of crime foster a sense of mistrust of strangers. If schools come to be thought of as

unsafe, parents are less likely to allow their children to participate in extracurricular activities at school that build in young people a sense of community participation, trust, and sociability. Opponents of federal gun control measures believe regulations on guns is another form of unwarranted government intrusion in our lives, and that it removes from individuals and communities the ability to make certain decisions for themselves. It is thus a turn toward more dependence on centralized government to make rules for us, and thus a violation of civil society. But to the extent that safety is a factor in promoting institutions of civil society, gun control can be seen as a way to make people feel safer, and the failure of government to act may ensure that people will be afraid to take the risk of reaching out to others to form the bonds of community.

On the other hand, people in some communities may feel unsafe because of the overly aggressive actions of local police. A federal government that fails to act if it appears that local police forces are out of bounds in their actions will contribute to the diminution of civil society in those communities.

Similarly, a federal government that fails to act to protect freedom of speech from incursions that can occur at the local level would weaken civil society. The bonds of community and associationalism require the existence of public spaces that serve as public forums where people can freely exchange ideas. Acting to ensure that localities do not give developers the right to destroy public spaces could be looked at as a way of protecting civil society, while the failure to act in some way to help prevent this might contribute to a reduced level of public interaction and thus a reduction of social capital. In the same way, a federal government that fails to take actions to prevent the merger–mania in the media is

also contributing to the destruction of the free exchange of ideas by allowing the media to become increasingly centralized in the hands of a few huge corporations. While those who place government and civil society in opposition to each other would consider action by government on this issue to be an incursion on civil society, it is actually the failure of government to act that is allowing other powerful forces in society to destroy sources of social capital.

Government regulation of business practices can serve to allow civil society to grow, while the failure of government to take vigorous action in this area can foster the destruction of social capital. For example, corporations destroy social capital in communities when they suddenly downsize their operations or move to another town or even another country. By failing to act to prevent companies from moving or downsizing without at least a certain amount of advance notice, government is contributing to the demise of civil society in these communities.

Unions are an important institution of civil society. Government action to force employers to recognize unions was thus a government act that enhanced civil society, and government policy--such as that under President Reagan--that winks at companies that try to destroy their unions are fostering a diminution of civil society.

If we include the family as an important institution of civil society, then government failure to recognize that families have inadequate time to interact because of changes in the American wage structure is government acquiescence to the destruction of social capital and the diminution of civil society. Today, the need for two full-time workers to support a family has resulted in parents having too little time to give their children the attention they

need. At several junctures in American history, government action was taken to force employers to shorten the work week. If the American work week were reduced to four days instead of five, working couples would have a far greater amount of time to attend to their children. Instead, government allows employers to demand more and more time from their personnel, resulting in less time for parents to spend with children, and thus less civil society. The increased amount of hours a family puts into work also affects the amount of time and commitment people are able to spend participating in voluntary associations, which are considered to be the heart of civil society.

Not all private associations are contributors to social capital and a healthy civil society. Some—especially organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan, which promote racism and other types of intergroup hatred—are not builders of social capital, but destroyers of it. Does government have a role in discouraging the formation of associations that have a negative impact on civil society? It could certainly be argued that looking the other way in the face of racism encourages these associations to grow, thus creating a cancer on civil society. On the other hand, government can create policy and governmental leaders can provide rhetoric that promotes multi-culturalism and inter-group sensitivity, toleration, and friendship. While government might have to do some things that would be considered incursions on community and individual rights in order to execute such policies, it seems clear that civil society would benefit from such action, while it would suffer from inaction in the face of racism.

Hence, those who believe that the key to strengthening our institutions of civil society is to get government out of the way, like those who believe that this is the key to an

enhanced level of private volunteerism and philanthropy, will be disappointed by the results of such a strategy. For while some forms of government action hold the potential to destroy civil society, other forms of government action are needed in order to protect civil society against incursions from other forces in society. It is therefore a mistake to perceive civil society and government to be forces in absolute opposition to each other. What matters is not the size and extent of government, but that government acts in the interest of the public at large and not in the interests of a rich and powerful few who have no interest in a rich civil society. A rich civil society is not needed merely in order to restrict government action, but to force government to act in a way that will in turn further enhance that civil society. A strong civil society and a government that is responsive to and acts vigorously in the public interest thus go hand-in-hand.

Conclusion. My findings on the relationship between government activism in addressing the issues of poverty and private volunteerism and philanthropy in this area indicate that we should seriously doubt the validity of the common assumption that we can promote an outpouring of voluntary efforts if we simply get government out of the way. It is said that if we do, people will stop relying on government to take care of these problems, and millions of people who might be inclined to step out on their own to help out if only government weren't doing it, because they would no longer be inhibited by this reliance on government. But when we study what motivates volunteers, how different patterns of philanthropy have emerged in different environments of public policy and political rhetoric, and how the level of charity within states relates to the level of public welfare in the states,

we discover that there is reason to believe that "big government" may beget "big citizenship", instead of inhibiting it.

This argument can be logically expanded to also cast serious doubt on common assumptions about the relationship between a broad agenda of government activism and civil society in general--not just charity, but the other formal and informal institutions outside of the realm of government and for-profit business through which people develop a sense of social trust, civic-mindedness and, ultimately, political efficacy. Because it is generally assumed that civil society is a force in opposition to government--that its primary value is as a wall against increasing incursions on our lives by government that may gradually lead to tyranny--the idea of civil society has reached a certain level of popularity in an age of anti-government sentiment, and conservative politicians have therefore reaped benefits from promoting this concept.

But the assumption of civil society and government as purely opposing forces fails to take into account the extent to which an activist government can affect the public mood. When government is activist, it takes on a broad range of issues, it communicates a message that these issues are important, and that these issues are societal ones that society has a responsibility to address. However, a government that does not aggressively work to solve a large number of problems that affect people communicates a different message, diminishing our sense of the importance of those issues and indicating that the problems are not the responsibility of society but of the individuals who suffer from those problems. A government that draws a larger realm of issues and problems into the public sphere will contribute to a sense that we live together as members of a society and not just as a mass of

isolated individuals. And it is the former, rather than the latter, mood that will foster a high level of social interaction in the realm of civil society.

In turn, a vigorous civil society will encourage the government to take on a wide ranging agenda of issues and problems by producing a more civic-minded populace that makes greater demands on government to work in the interest of the common good. It will also make demands on government to perform policies that will protect the institutions of civil society against other forces that may diminish or destroy these institutions.

A government can take oppressive actions which can destroy the institutions of civil society, and a rich civil society can, in a variety of ways, serve as a bulwark against government tyranny. However, it is also clear that a government which fails to act vigorously for the public good can become an accomplice in the destruction of civil society, and that a vigorous government agenda can reinforce and promote an increased level of civil society. George Will has written that, "as the state waxes, other institutions wane." We may learn, however, that the opposite is true: when government does nothing to address problems that affect many of us, it will communicate to us that these problems are not worthy of our attention as a society, cause us to feel less of a common interest in the interest of societal goods, and discourage us from becoming involved in social concerns.

CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSION

Myths, or at least untested assumptions, guide much of public policy toward people suffering from poverty in the United States. Many of these cultural assumptions follow from a tendency we have to see life as a series of zero-sum games, the world as a set of finite possibilities in which more of one thing means less of something else, in which to choose one set of ends and means to achieve them is to reject a different set of goals and actions. One goal competes with another, one choice eliminates other choices.

Some of these myths and assumptions relate directly to popular perceptions of poor people and affect public policy toward them. It is difficult, despite statistical evidence to the contrary, to dissuade people from believing that welfare causes dependency in individuals that causes them to stay in poverty, that generation after generation comes to depend on welfare, that welfare mothers have baby after baby to get more money. Put differently, people perceive that there is a finite sum of energy and effort, a zero-sum game in which the more effort we put into helping people who fall into poverty, the less effort poor people will put into helping themselves.

Other myths and assumptions affect the way we perceive the relationship between governmental and private voluntary action. It may be desirable to address the societal problem of poverty, and the problems that individuals who are in poverty face. However, arguments over how this should be done seem always to imply that we have to choose

between two courses of action that contradict each other, either through government programs or through private, voluntary action. We have to make a choice because, we believe, the more effort that government puts forth to address these problems, the more individuals will look to government to take action, and the less they will do on their own to help out. Once again, it is assumed that there is a zero-sum game in which there is a finite amount of effort to be provided; that more from one source means less from the other.

On the left, there seems to be an assumption that we have to choose between solving the problems of individuals and solving the larger political and social issues that underlie the problems of individuals. If too much attention and effort is focused on helping individuals one at a time, this energy is drained from the sphere of political action. We will always, as the old parable goes, be saving drowning victims instead of going to the bridge where the people are being pushed off.

The scholarly arguments over civil society of the past decade or so are also infused with zero-sum thinking. We think of civil society as occupying a space between the sphere of government and the sphere of for-profit business. If a vigorous civil society--a sphere for formal and informal association--is necessary in order to ensure a well-working democracy, and if civil society is in fact in decline, then we indeed do need to reinvigorate our civil society. As I have pointed out in previous chapters, for many political thinkers this goal can be achieved mainly by getting government out of the way, so that people will depend less on government and look to themselves and their neighbors to address problems in their communities, so that people will be able to gain a sense of identity from membership in community institutions instead of looking directly to government and thus so weakening

the infrastructures of democratic participation as to create the danger of totalitarianism. But it may be foolish to make the assumption that government action must necessarily substitute for private action and vice versa. It may be what government does, rather than how much government does, that affects the level of civil society that we enjoy, for it may be that a democratically chosen government can take positive actions that promote, rather than inhibit, private institution building. In fact, as noted in Chapter 3, scholars of the history of philanthropy and social welfare in the United States such as Michael Katz, Jennifer Wolch, and Lester Salamon have all demonstrated that a great deal of the resources for the creation of private hospitals, universities, charities, and cultural institutions have historically been provided by government. Many of these institutions, in turn, can serve as centers of independent thought and thus as a check on government.

Thus, if we believe that voluntary action is important and if we want to figure out how best to encourage it, it is necessary to break out of the myth of the zero-sum game and the belief that more government action means less private action and that less government action will result in an outpouring of private action. If we do break out of this mental box, then we can see, as I believe the findings from my own study demonstrate, that governmental and private action can be complementary in many ways. When government takes action to address a problem such as poverty, this is likely to reflect a popular belief that something should be done (since the government is made up of popularly elected officeholders), and this compassionate attitude is also likely to be reflected in a high level of private initiative to show compassion through volunteerism and philanthropy. In addition, government programs to address the problems of poverty are likely to set an

example that the problem should be seen as a social, rather than as a purely individual problem. By doing this, government provides leadership, and many people are likely to take the cue that the problem is a problem of the society, of which they are members, and are thus more likely to feel that they should contribute their own efforts to addressing the problem. Also, government attention to a problem is likely to focus public attention on the problem, especially since the media take a lot of their cues as to what is newsworthy from what government is doing. And this attention is likely to cause more people to want to get involved.

In addition, the type of public policy that is chosen communicates not only a message about the societal or individual nature of the problem, but a message about the people suffering from that problem. If, as I have argued, the “identification theory” of volunteerism presented by Schervish and Havens is correct, then the degree to which public policy implies, and to which rhetoric surrounding public policy directly states, that poor people are largely at fault for their own problems, is important. For these messages communicate that the poor are unlike the rest of us in a fundamental way, and people who see the poor as unlike themselves will be less likely to personally get involved in helping the poor. They will be less likely to help because they will be less likely to identify with them and thus less likely to feel the sense of personal fulfillment one gets from helping those with whom we feel empathy.

But even if we break out of the box of zero–sum thinking about public and private action, decisions about how to address important problems in our society are also impacted by another set of myths about the nature of voluntary action itself, myths which are

perpetuated, I believe, out of an ideological motive (perhaps subconscious) on the part of thinkers on both the right and the left, who present the philanthropic community as a caricature of what it really is. Both resort to stereotypes about the voluntary community based on old notions that are no longer true. The right does this to present an idyllic vision of charity, while the left does this to present us with a view of charitable organizations as overbearing and demeaning to the people they claim to serve.

For the right, which I have represented in part through the arguments of Marvin Olasky, there was once a golden age of charity in America. Instead of government handouts, people in need were helped primarily by private charities that exhibited true caring about their clientele. People who needed assistance were required to correct the flaws in their personal conduct that had caused their poverty in the first place. They were taught the values of hard work and personal discipline, and these were a prerequisite to receiving aid. This was an age in which "obligations as well as rights were emphasized; when mutual obligation rather than mere transfer of material was the rule." Those who were better-off were "to suffer with the troubled. It had to be conditional; when the recipient was responsible for his plight, he was to indicate a willingness to change." "It had to honor those among the poor who did not give up; they had to be treated not as chumps but as human beings who deserved great "respect for character."¹⁷²

However, in the second half of the 20th Century, according to Olasky, government took over the primary responsibility for helping the poor, and tragically created an ideology

172 Marvin Olasky, *The Tragedy of American Compassion* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery, 1995), p. 31.

of entitlement that also infused the increasingly professionalized and government funded private charitable sector. We began to accept anti-social behavior, and replaced teaching the value of self-reliance with the promotion of dependency. The result was the creation of a culture of poverty, a dysfunctional and dependent chronically poor underclass which has learned that it is entitled to help regardless of their personal behavior. Disliking "people who spit in other people's faces,"¹⁷³ Americans have consequently turned their backs on the poor, and consequently this is a far less compassionate country than it once was.

Olasky's prescription is for less government welfare, not because of the expense of welfare, but because it is "inevitably too stingy in what is really important, treating people as people and not animals," and also because it is "based on having someone else take action," rather than on getting individuals to take action voluntarily and with true compassion. But his prescription is also for a change in the way that private charity operates today-- "too many private charities dispense aid indiscriminately and thus provide, instead of points of light, alternative shades of darkness."¹⁷⁴ He provides several examples of voluntary programs that focus on individual responsibility, and insists that we can go back to a time when charity involved volunteers with "warm hearts and hard heads."

On the left, there is a perception of charity, both historically and currently, as a "moral enterprise with a clear social script" which "produces heroes and model citizens who give, and deferential and meek citizens who accept. It delineates society with a clear

173 Olasky, p. 228

174 Olasky, p. 233

boundary between moral and immoral.”¹⁷⁵ Not only does the existence of private charity create a justification for an “anemic” welfare state in comparison with other Western, industrialized countries, and not only is the work done by private charity insufficient, or even irrelevant to the real needs of the people they believe they are helping, but it is a system for glorification and redemption of the rich at the expense of the degradation of the people in need of assistance. In this sense, charity continues to promote the sense that poverty is a moral, rather than an economic, problem, for which the main solution is not structural change or even material assistance to those who suffer, but “assimilation, education, rehabilitation, and in extreme cases, punishment.”¹⁷⁶

Recommends David Wagner, “instead of waxing rhapsodic about corporations giving 1 percent of their pre-tax billions to charity, a serious campaign to force big business to finance the benefits that many European workers and their families already receive would be a most valuable way for the rich to display their 'love', and that Americans should demand that corporation pay taxes to provide universal benefits instead of donating their loose change to a charitable sector that promotes this system of heroic givers and meek recipients of help.”

These sweeping generalizations of the charitable community held by both the left and the right are based on opposing sets of myths and stereotypes about philanthropy and volunteerism which, while they do contain some truth, are based on outdated perceptions of

175 David Wagner, *What's Love Got to Do With It? A Critical Look at American Charity* (New York: New Press, 2000) p. 74

176 Wagner, p. 49.

charity. I believe that my own, first-hand account of the view and perception of volunteers and volunteer administrators in New York City provides a more realistic insight into what the charitable community believes is its role in the current context, into the actual value of charitable activity, and into charity's appropriate place in helping to alleviate some of the problems in our society--into how much we should depend on charity and into the limits of charity.

At the same time, I believe my study provides a new prism through which to see the charitable sector in relation to government, which may allow us to understand the importance of charitable voluntary activity to political action in defense of the poor, to providing types of help that government could never provide, and to helping to foster a vigorous civil society.

Active Government; Active Communities--Beyond the Zero-Sum Box

When President Bill Clinton made the speech which provoked this study ("The era of big government may be over, but the era of big challenges for our country is not, and so we need an era of big citizenship..."), he implied a commonly held belief in the United States--that when government becomes more active in addressing a particular problem, people will become less likely to become active themselves by volunteering to address the problem themselves. They will look to government to solve the problem, and they will thus sit back. If government does not actively address the problem, people will be more likely to volunteer. On one level, this seems logical. If the problem is being taken care of, people

will not see the need to do anything. But if the problem is not being addressed, concerned people will feel that they ought to do something because nothing is being done. Thus, government action and voluntary action are alternatives, and the more we choose to address a problem through one of these paths, the less we will choose to address the problem through the other. Government social programs and private, voluntary initiatives are thus competing in a zero-sum game, and we have to choose between them.

However, a deeper look may provide us with a more realistic picture of the relationship between governmental and private, voluntary action. First, we must look at how governmental action may come about. So far, I have, for simplicity's sake, ignored this process, but it is worth considering. First, some interest group or less formally organized group of people see or experience a problem first-hand, and that group decides to do something to address the problem. The group may try to address the problem directly, on a voluntary basis, or may decide to try to convince elected officials that there should be some action taken by government to address the problem, or it may do both--direct action and public policy advocacy--at the same time. Both forms of activity bring publicity--through the media--to the existence and extent of the problem, perhaps make more people aware that things they are personally experiencing are in fact wider problems than they knew, or perhaps makes them realize that they are suffering from a problem that is experienced by many others as well, that they are not alone, or not at fault. There is something that can and should be done.

But, the problem or issue in question will receive the most publicity if it becomes a political issue--that is, if elected officeholders or politicians seeking elective office choose

to address it. If a politician chooses to make the problem a campaign issue, the media will cover what the politician has to say and proposes to do about the problem. If officeholders in government decide to propose legislation or take executive action, this will be surrounded by rhetoric to support or justify the action, and voices may also be raised in opposition to the action. The imprimatur of a government response or the use of the issue in a campaign gives the issue a higher level of legitimacy, and brings with it massive media attention.

The point here is that, frequently, the rhetoric of politicians and the action of government (or politicians seeking office) often precede widespread attention or even knowledge of the problem being addressed. Or, it redefines a problem we know about from a minor one to a major problem that merits the attention of society as a whole. We, the public, take cues from the leadership of governmental actors. Government provides leadership, and sets an example, through its actions and through the rhetoric that surrounds these actions.

Another way that government attention can be drawn to an issue or problem, in addition to responding to an interest group, is that politicians may perceive a widespread desire among the public for a particular direction in policy. It may be that, in an election, the voters choose a party or candidate that promises to increase social welfare programs, or one that promises to cut back, or that chooses not to make poverty a major campaign issue. In this case, I would expect that the public is expressing a desire to increase or to cut back government attention to the problems of poverty. If increased social welfare is a significant issue, then I would expect the voters' choice of the party promising to do more reflects a sense of compassion which is likely to be expressed not only in the choice of candidates, but

also in the individual actions of those voters. It is hard to imagine that a public in which there is a widespread desire to reduce poverty or to at least provide a greater social safety net for those who are poor would not also want to express compassion through philanthropy and volunteerism; and it is hard to imagine that an increased desire to give and volunteer to help people in poverty would not also be reflected in a desire for government to do so as well. As an analogy, if the number of people who wanted government to do more to address domestic violence or the environment were to increase, this would indicate a growth in public concern about the problem, and we should expect larger numbers of people to volunteer and to give to private charities that address domestic violence or the environment as well. The opposite relationship would appear to be illogical.

But when it comes to the particular area of social welfare, the relationship may be particularly subtle. As my survey of volunteers shows, and as my interviews with volunteer administrators appear to confirm, people who come out to help people in need—be it tutoring or mentoring a child from a disadvantaged background, serving food in a soup kitchen, or helping people on welfare develop job skills—simply want to be helpful, whether out of simple altruism, or to fulfill a psychological need, or to practice one's personal beliefs, or to feel like a part of one's community. They rarely state that they want to help "the poor," rarely put into their explanations for their decisions to volunteer a definition of the people they want to help, or a concern about the extent of a problem, or a concern that enough is not being done. Instead, they say that they want to "help others," or to "be helpful," or "do some good," or that they volunteer because they feel they should do something or that members of society have an obligation to help others, or because they find

helping other to be enjoyable or fulfilling. Their desires tend to lack specificity, and therefore seem—on the surface—to be unrelated to anything government does. And most themselves believe they would do what they do regardless of whether government did more or less to help the clientele they work with.

While, then, it may seem we should conclude that government actions have no impact on people's decision to volunteer—for the respondents are not responding to a specific government policy—we should first pay some attention to what appear to be two closely related, fundamental characteristics of volunteers in human services. First, human services volunteers are people who do not place people who need assistance in a category of people that are different from themselves; they see people in need of help as being fundamentally the same as themselves. Second, human services volunteers are people who see the problems they are working to help solve as social problems rather than individual problems, or as social and individual problems at the same time, but hardly any see the problems they are working to help solve as solely individual in nature. Only two percent of my survey sample of volunteers thought the latter.

The first finding confirms the theory of Schervish and Havens, described in Chapter Four, that the principle factor that leads people to decide to volunteer to help others is an ability to empathize with people who are suffering, an ability to derive fulfillment from helping people in need because one personally identifies with those people, the way that one identifies with one's kin. People are most likely to volunteer to help people with whom they feel a sense of “we-ness,” or when they perceive those in need of help as part of an extended “we” rather than as some foreign “other.”

The second indicates that how problems are popularly defined affects the likelihood of people getting personally involved in helping to solve those problems or in ameliorating the suffering of those who are victims of those problems. A person who believes that another is poor because of his or her lack of responsibility, or laziness, or moral failings is much less likely to want to volunteer to help those people than is someone who believes someone who is poor is not entirely at fault for his or her own problems.

It follows that government actions and rhetoric, and the campaign rhetoric of political parties and political candidates, can theoretically have an impact on people's willingness to volunteer in human services to the extent that the action and rhetoric can help to foster different moods about those who are poor. If policies and rhetoric that communicate a sense that those who are poor are like the rest of us--people who are basically good and who try to help themselves but are hindered by certain societal obstacles--we are likely to define those people as part of the "we" with whom we identify and whom we find it self-fulfilling to help. But if policies and rhetoric serve to demonize the poor, to communicate the message that people are poor because of personal failings, then we are more likely to see those people as "others", as a category fundamentally different from ourselves. We are thus less likely to want to do something to help those people. Similarly, if policies and rhetoric communicate that the problems are at least to some extent the fault and responsibility of society, then more people, as members of society, will feel a personal responsibility for doing something about the problem; while if policies and rhetoric communicate that the problem is the fault of individuals and that individuals are solely responsible for lifting themselves from their circumstances, people are less likely to want

to get involved because they will not see themselves as sharing responsibility.

While these notions are drawn from interpretations of the survey responses of just a few hundred volunteers, we can see a relationship between levels of government activism on social welfare and private giving to social welfare-related causes that appears to confirm these notions. In Chapter 5, I showed how patterns of private philanthropy have related to patterns of government social welfare spending in the United States over the past half-century. Clearly, the most important factor affecting private giving is the state of the economy, or people's sense that they can afford to give. But within periods of economic growth, the rate of growth in private philanthropy--both overall and to human services organizations--is not always the same. During the 1960s, when there was a rapidly growing economy and explosive growth in government social welfare programs, private giving grew tremendously in relation to the size of the adult population and to the level of actual need (measured by the number of people below the poverty line). In the 1980s, years when there was again strong economic growth, but very slow growth in government spending on social welfare, private philanthropy to human services grew much more slowly--both in terms of the size of the adult population and in terms of my measure of actual need, then it had in the earlier period of more generous government social welfare provision.

And, interestingly, the two years in which there were national election campaigns that involved a great deal of negative rhetoric about the poor and about social welfare--the 1980 "Reagan Revolution" presidential election campaign and the 1994 "Gingrich Revolution" congressional campaign--saw sudden, sharp drops in the amount of private philanthropy after years of growth, swings that cannot be explained by economic factors,

since the economy in each year was basically moving in the same direction in each of these years as it had been for awhile. The drops in giving were most pronounced in each of these years in the category of giving by individuals (as opposed to by corporations, bequests, and foundations) and in the category of giving to human services (as opposed to arts and culture, education, health, and other recipient categories). And, in 1996, the year of the Personal Responsibility Act which ended "welfare as we know it," while general philanthropic giving boomed along with the economy, giving to human services failed to recover from the 1994 drop, indicating that negative attitudes toward the poor and a belief that the poor are responsible for their own problems, which was part of the intense rhetoric surrounding the Act, may have dampened people's desire to give to this particular area of charity.

Similarly, as I demonstrated in Chapter 6, comparative statistics among the 50 states show that those that dedicate greater governmental resources to public welfare poor capita and per the number of people below the poverty line, also contain the largest charitable sectors per capita and per the number of poor people. Moreover, states tend to cling to regional norms in terms of both levels of social welfare and levels of private charity, regardless of the economic conditions or other factors within individual states. This may indicate that the way in which people view the poor and responsibility for poverty is affected by factors in regional cultures that impact upon both the level of social welfare and the level of private charity. In other words, public welfare and private charity do not move in opposite directions. Instead, they move together. Cultural tendencies that tend to result in higher levels of one also result in higher levels of the other.

My contention is that these trends and changes indicate that government and political

actions and rhetoric about social welfare and about the poor both reflect a mood among the populace and contribute to that mood. A government that is active in addressing poverty and in helping to ameliorate the problems of individuals who suffer in poverty communicates to the public a sense that the problem is large and serious enough to merit society's attention, that the problem is the responsibility of society--through its government--to address, and that the people in need are deserving of society's assistance. A government that does not actively take responsibility for addressing poverty or the suffering of the poor, or that attempts to cut back the level of government assistance to the poor, communicates a message that the problem does not merit society's attention and that those suffering are wholly at fault for and responsible for their situation. When we lean toward believing in societal responsibility and the worthiness of people who are poor, we are likely to want to help. When we believe they are themselves at fault and are rightly on their own, we are not likely to want to help.

Thus, those who believe that cutting back government services to the poor will bring an outpouring of people to help by giving and volunteering--people who would give or volunteer if government activism did not "crowd out" their own involvement--will be disappointed when this outpouring fails to emerge. When, in the face of poverty, government sets the example that it is okay to look the other way, increasing numbers of people will follow that leadership and look the other way themselves. And gaps in government services will be less, not more, likely to be filled by private individuals.

Active Government; Better Charity--Creating A Better Niche for Voluntarism

Not only does it appear, based on my findings, that active government is likely to beget a greater level of private philanthropy and volunteerism, but it also appears that more comprehensive government social programs will provide greater space for, rather than crowding out, innovative private voluntary programs that help people in a unique way that could not, even in the best of worlds, be done well by government. This is so for two reasons.

First, when government welfare programs are more comprehensive, segments of the voluntary sector are released from the necessity of providing the most fundamental services for their clientele. Although it is true that many non-profit organizations become in a sense subsidiaries of government, receiving grants from government to perform the services dictated by government, other organizations--ones that maintain independence from government by obtaining most or all of their funding from non-governmental sources--are able to, or perhaps even forced to, move into the provision of a more unique set of services.

This is a reality that critics of charity from both the left and the right should note. On the left, charity is often seen as demeaning toward the people who are ostensibly served because of the way in which the givers judge the recipients of aid and demand that the recipients adapt the values and behavior patterns of the givers. On the right, charity is criticized for being too liberal with its aid, for following the lead of government in treating aid as an entitlement rather than as a right.

Both arguments imply the assumption that recipients of the benefits of charity are

reliant on the charities for the material assistance they need. Only such reliance would give charities the power over those who come to them for assistance, for the root of the power of a private charitable organization over the clientele--the root of a charity's ability to make demands on people seeking aid--is the ability to deny or to threaten to withhold aid. Yet, over the 60 plus years between the New Deal and the mid-1990s, charities lost much of this power, because providing material aid, and deciding who should be able to get it and who should not, has become mainly the job of government. Charities play a role in making decisions over providing or withholding aid only to the extent that they serve as surrogates for government programs, when they receive government grants to fulfill the execution of programs created by the government. And these charities are subject to rules set by government as to who is eligible for assistance and how much they can get.

As I pointed out in Chapter 7, the world of human services charities today appears to be divided between a relatively small number of charities that receive a majority of their funding from government and work at least in part as extensions of government, and a relatively large number of charities that receive little or none of their funding from government. The latter group could be divided into two parts: those that compensate for the failure of, or gaps in, government welfare provision, such as soup kitchens and homeless shelters; and those that take on a role that it is hard to imagine government performing. This last type of organization was prevalent among the 40 non-profits where I conducted interviews. In Chapter Six, I describe the work of a number of these groups, which perform an extremely wide range of services: from matching mentors and long-term one-on-one tutors for young people to taking youths out of the inner-city during the summer to give

them a vacation experience that most would otherwise never be able to obtain, from helping former drug addicts build job skills to providing classes in food budgeting and nutrition, from counseling poor children who are losing parents to AIDS to even helping women trying to enter the workforce to put together outfits for interviews.

The less that government provides the so-called “handouts” of welfare--the money benefits, shelter allowances, food stamps, shelters--the more that the resources of the non-profit sector must be dedicated to providing basic material needs. And, the less government does to provide basic needs, the more power private agencies have in deciding whether individuals will receive or be denied aid, and the more demands these agencies can place on the clientele or potential clientele to make behavioral changes. However, the less possible it is for these private agencies, which must dedicate themselves to basic needs provision, to take innovative measures to really get involved in the lives of their clientele and really help them on a personal and long-term level, the less likely these private agencies will be to perform the truly compassionate kinds of deeds that Olasky would like to see.

The more generous and comprehensive are government social welfare programs, the less need there may be for voluntary action to provide the most basic material needs, and the more the voluntary community will move away from basic needs provision into the production of auxiliary services which complement what government does.

This is very arguably the best possible role for voluntary action, a role which may be needed regardless of the level of government social welfare provision. When potential clientele have their most basic material needs met by government sources, they do not come to the private agency as begging supplicants, but, in a way, as volunteers themselves (or as

volunteers on behalf of their children, as when they decide to send their children to tutoring programs). Among the agencies I studied, not one made the assistance it provides contingent on changes in the behavior of the clientele, or a declaration of faith, or on their doing some make-work in exchange for crumbs. Every one of these organizations held its programs open to all comers.

These programs are voluntary, then, in two senses--the people providing the services do so because they want to, and so do the people being served. The clients want to improve their lives, but unlike the people in New York City's "Work Experience Program," who are being forced to work in order not to lose their welfare benefits, the individuals receiving the services of these agencies are volunteers themselves. They choose to participate, or to have their children participate. The power relationship between charity and poor client is removed--or at least reduced--because the charity is not responsible for providing the most basic needs; the client can then walk whenever he or she wants. The freedom of choice on both sides of this relationship creates an opportunity for "horizontal relationships" between the "givers" and "receivers." The two can meet each other as equals.

It is my contention that if charity were more like the Olasky ideal, focusing on forcing those who are poor to correct personal flaws in order to obtain assistance, few people would come out to help as volunteers because most people wouldn't feel inspired to assist those people who are so bad and immoral. It is the sense that you are helping someone who is deserving of assistance, just as you would be deserving if you had some unfortunate circumstances in your background, that is more likely to inspire you to want to help.

Volunteerism in Human Services as Political Education

Critics of charity from the left often make the zero-sum assumption that when people are choosing to volunteer in direct human services, they are choosing not to volunteer in addressing political issues that create the problems of the individuals they are trying to help, and that there is thus a trade-off between political and non-political activism. As David Wagner argues, "Charity viewed as an institution takes raw recruits, often idealists, and places them in a highly traditional regulated relationship to clients, patients, consumers, or other recipients. While it urges some incontestably good advice on its workers and volunteers, it also limits their action and controls their interaction in important ways," screening out "those who might want to talk politics with clients, who might suggest that they 'bite the hand that feeds them,' or raise criticisms of institutional structures." Asks Wagner, "What if all the energy that went into volunteering and working at millions of positions in the non-profit economy were channeled elsewhere? What if these people were recruited as organizers of social action that demanded more for the needy? What if the challenge was seen as attempting to change society for the better rather than merely ladling out soup at a kitchen or making sandwiches at a shelter?"¹⁷⁷

In response, it perhaps should be asked whether people are likely to go out and do politically oriented volunteer work when they have no first-hand experience with the people

177 Wagner, p. 174-175

on whose behalf they would be advocating, whether they would feel they understand the intricacies of the issues well enough, whether they would have the kind of sympathy, sensitivity, and understanding that might come from building direct relationships with people in need.

As my findings show, most people come to decide to volunteer out of a desire to help, without a specific cause or group of people they would like to help. As several of the non-profit administrators I spoke with indicated, most volunteers first make a decision to volunteer, and only then begin to think about what they would like to do. In other words, they start out without a definite issue orientation.

What volunteers seem to know when they start out is that they want to do something with tangible results. And, as one administrator put it, "they can relate to" helping to make a difference in another person's life, one-on-one, "as opposed to an overwhelming problem."

But my evidence also shows a tendency for people's awareness of the politics behind the problems their clientele are facing to grow as they become more experienced volunteers, especially when they spend a long time working with one particular client population. Working with a group of people who are suffering because of a particular problem may teach the volunteers several things: it may break down certain stereotypes about the clientele population, may enhance the volunteers' understanding that the problem being addressed has complex causes that go beyond individual flaws or failings, may make the volunteers aware that their volunteer efforts alone are not sufficient to address the problem, may make them more realistic about the extent of the problem or the size of the population that suffers

because of the problem. The longer they have volunteered in direct human services provision, the more likely they are to call on government to address the problem, the less likely they are to define the problem as individual in nature, and the more likely they are to believe that their own voluntary efforts would be less necessary if government did more to address the issue. Among prospective volunteers--most at the very beginning of their volunteer careers, 47.7 percent agree that problems they are working on are "individual problems, which should be addressed by personal improvements on the part of those who are suffering." Only 36.2 percent of current volunteers, those who have already been in their assignments for some length of time, agree with this statement. Among prospective volunteers, 17.7 percent agree that "the issues I work on (or wish to work on) would be better addressed by government than through volunteerism," while 33.8 percent of current volunteers agreed with this statement. Twice as many current as prospective volunteers agree that there would be less need for their voluntary efforts if government did more to address the problems they are concerned with, and that they would be less likely to volunteer if government did more.

Those who volunteered for more than three years with one organization were also far more likely than those who were volunteers for less than three years to disagree with the statement that the problems they are addressing are individual in nature, and were for more likely to agree that government should play the primary role in addressing the issue, that government could do a better job than voluntary efforts, and that their own efforts would be less necessary if there was a greater government effort.

What is at work here? I would argue that these trends are evidence of the educational

aspect of volunteerism—people who volunteer learn more than they had known previously about the complexities and realities of the issues, the lives of the people they are helping, the limitations of their own efforts, and the insufficiency of government attention to the problems they see. This education makes them more—not less—likely to perceive the problems they are working on as political issues requiring public policy solutions.

Not only do the volunteers learn the political nature of many of the problems they work on; so do the organizations in which they work. Most of the organizations included in this study do not discourage political thinking and political action among their volunteers; some encourage it. And many of the organizations are themselves involved in larger public policy advocacy activities, ranging from lobbying at the local, state, and federal levels on policy proposals that would affect their clientele; to membership in national and even international political advocacy organizations; to participation in protests on issues involving their clientele. And while these organizations may be more focused on providing practical assistance than on encouraging the clientele to “bite the hand that feeds them,” many do encourage—rather than discourage—their clientele to obtain the public benefits to which they are entitled, bring in legal counselors to advise them on their rights to benefits, help their clientele negotiate the bureaucracy to obtain benefits, even bring in social work teams to provide references to public agencies. Some of the organizations in my sample have even selected some clientele to go on lobbying trips to give legislators and other public officials a first-hand account of the problems caused by a particular public policy. In addition, non-profits that perform direct services often perform research that results in a greater public knowledge of the existence and extent of problems that exist, as did the Community Service

Society in a recent study of the outcomes of welfare reform policies in New York City.

So, if anything, volunteerism in direct human services builds politically interested citizens, and non-profit organizations involved in helping the poor also become political actors (although some start out with the dual purposes of direct service and public advocacy). More direct services volunteerism does not mean less political activism; to the contrary, it is probably a source of increased political activism.

Implications for Civil Society

My "active government; active communities" argument has implications for the ongoing discussion of civil society which has been going on within the discipline of Political Science, and to some extent in popular thought, in recent years. As I have suggested, the level of volunteerism is a very important aspect of a vigorous civil society. Of course, high levels of volunteerism in all areas indicates an active society in which people are involved in an intellectual and cultural life outside the realms of the government and corporate sectors. It indicates the existence of a high level of resources for independent thought and communication that are essential for democracy. But, in particular, the willingness of large numbers to get involved in human services volunteerism indicates a degree of empathy and identification with others, often across lines of class and race. The resulting interaction can be a source of the horizontal bonds among people that advocates of civil society believe is essential to create a sense of efficacy among large numbers of people and thus provides a vital resource for enabling members of the public to serve as a necessary check on the potential excesses of government.

Historically, the vision of what we now call civil society has been a preoccupation of thinkers who are concerned about the excesses of active government and its potential dangers. From Tocqueville to Nisbet to Gingrich, conservatives have been concerned that too much government involvement in the provision of various needs of the public will lead people to become overly dependent upon government, instead of turning to themselves or to their communities in a spirit of self-sufficiency and mutual support. And when people turn too often to government, and identify too much with government rather than with smaller, local, organizations for a sense of membership and identity, tyranny will result. Robert Nisbet, for example, warns us to avoid a situation in which there is an "absolute identity of State and society--nothing outside the State, everything in the State," against a society in which "the basic needs for education, recreation, welfare, economic production, distribution, and consumption, health, spiritual and physical, and all other services of society are made aspects of the administrative structure of political government."¹⁷⁸ He urges us to maintain a society in which "the state is inherently pluralist and, whatever the intentions of its formal political rulers, its power will be limited by associations whose plurality of claims upon their members is the measure of their members' freedom from any monopoly of power in society."¹⁷⁹

Again, this is a zero-sum argument, assuming that more government means less civil society, for the more government does, the more people will turn to government instead of

178 Ibid, p. 282

179 Ibid, p. 284

to institutions of civil society. In turn, more civil society is a bulwark against too much government involvement in the domestic life of the country, which inherently inhibits our ability as individuals and as communities to make decisions about how to lead our own lives.

But, as I also discuss in Chapter Eight, civil society is an important value for liberals as well as for conservatives. For civil society is not merely important as a bulwark against aggressive intrusions on our personal lives by government, but also a force in enabling people to ensure that government takes aggressive measures to help solve problems, provide services, protect minorities, and a host of other positive actions. Putnam makes this point clear in his study of regional governments in Italy, in which the regions with the most active associational life did not have the least intrusive governments, but the most active governments in addressing the needs and concerns of their constituents. This was so because the people in these regions had developed a sense of efficacy and a set of organizational resources through which to pressure government to act in their interests.

So institutions of mutual association are not merely a defense against the worst excesses of government; they are also essential to getting government to act boldly in the interests of the people. If this is true, then volunteerism and philanthropy in the realm of human services for people who are poor or disadvantaged is an especially essential component of civil society, because it allows very large numbers of people to confront, often face-to-face, a set of needs and problems that affect a segment of society that lacks many of the organizational and personal efficacy resources that would enable them to pressure government to address their needs in a sufficient and sympathetic way. The professionals and volunteers in non-profit human service agencies develop greater knowledge and

expertise about their clientele, the problems their clientele face, and the best solutions to those problems. Professionals and volunteers in agencies that are independent from the state can serve, in a time of demonization of the poor and attacks on benefits to the poor, as a bulwark against greater attacks on the poor and programs that at least attempt to prevent the worst consequences of poverty. And even in a world in which government provided ample resources and energy to the effort to alleviate poverty, this constituency would be necessary as a check to ensure that these programs are run fairly and that they work to serve the people they are intended to serve. The non-profit, human services community can thus push government to take greater positive action, indicating that the relationship between this particular manifestation of civil society and the amount of government action is not necessarily inverse, but can often be positive.

In turn, if I am right about the effect that government actions and rhetoric can have on our sense of social versus individual responsibility for problems, and on our attitudes toward people, then government can certainly have an impact on people's willingness to volunteer in human services in the first place. It is my argument that increased government attention to a particular issue or problem will tend to lead to more people paying attention to and coming out on their own initiative to help solve or alleviate that problem. It follows, then, that positive government actions can increase volunteerism, and thus increase the extent and strength of the institutions of civil society. What matters is not only how much government does, but what government does, and one thing government is capable of doing is providing leadership by example. Government is a source of leadership and it can influence people to perform the most horrible acts or to treat each other with respect and as

equals.

In America, government has often used its leadership capabilities to encourage people to make changes in their personal attitudes and conduct. Actions by government can legitimize viewpoints and thus lead to massive changes in public opinion. Theodore Roosevelt's creation of a national park system led to increased attention to the environment and encouraged the formation of a number of environmental organizations. Franklin Roosevelt's recognition of the right to form labor unions legitimized unions in the minds of many people, and helped to lead to increased union formation. The administration of Lyndon Johnson brought greater attention to the problems of poverty in the United States. Ronald Reagan's firing of the air traffic controllers put an imprimatur of legitimacy on aggressive action against unions, which egged on more union-busting activity by corporations.

On a somewhat more subtle level, government actions and political rhetoric can play an important role in people's sense of responsibility toward others. It is my argument that this is exactly what happened during the campaign years of 1980 and 1994. In 1980, Ronald Reagan's presidential campaign emphasized the need for people to work hard and do well for themselves as the best way to address the problems the country was facing, while President Carter had complained about the country's problems resulting in part from people's unwillingness to work together and to make personal sacrifices. Right or wrong, Reagan legitimized and justified selfishness, legitimized the idea that everyone working hard for themselves will have the best results for everyone. The emphasis on self-sufficiency implied that people who failed to be self-sufficient were losers by their own fault, and thus

the number of people willing to go out and help suddenly dropped.

While the number of people making contributions to human services causes began eight years of rapid growth in 1982, when the economy began to grow again, this growth-- both in relation to the number of people of prime giving age and to the number of people in actual need--grew at a much slower pace than it did during the previous period of rapid economic growth in the 1960s. While growth in human services volunteerism in the 1960s was spurred by the example of positive government action and compassionate rhetoric toward the poor, this growth was inhibited through the 1980s by the example of government inattention to the problems of poverty, which communicated the message that it was okay to look the other way and to think solely about one's own well-being.

In 1994, the congressional campaign featured a very direct attack on welfare, which involved much negative rhetoric about people who are poor. The rhetoric that the poor were largely responsible for their own plight and needed to take greater personal responsibility was accompanied by another sudden, sharp drop in philanthropy to social welfare-oriented causes. Once again, it appears that political rhetoric justified ignoring the problems of poverty.

The most rapid and sustained growth in private philanthropy in the past half century occurred during the 1960s, a time of vast economic growth combined with a tremendous amount of government attention to the problems of poverty, which focused the attention of many individuals on the problem, contributed to their feeling more sympathetic and to their defining the problem as societal in nature, and thus encouraged them to act on their own to help solve the problem. And this indicates that, while a rich civil society can push

government to greater levels of activity, heightened government activity on a particular problem or issue can in turn encourage further growth of the civil society.

If these things are true, then we must reject the argument that, in order for there to be a rich environment for the forming of mutual associations, we need government to retreat from addressing many of the problems the society faces. For the very act of retreating from the obligation to help communicates the message that it is okay to ignore these problems or issues, and the act of aggressively addressing the problems communicates that the problem is worthy of the attention of society and the responsibility of society.

Thus, to go back to the point on which I quoted Nisbet, government does not only threaten civil society by doing too much, by becoming overly intrusive and making us too dependent on centralized institutions of government at the expense of reliance on ourselves and our neighbors; it can also threaten civil society by ignoring social problems, by communicating through actions and rhetoric that the problems are the fault of individuals and thus the responsibility of the suffering individuals to solve. Government can also contribute to the breakdown of institutions of civil society by legitimizing the views held by groups that are intolerant of others, simply by looking the other way and not aggressively doing things to promote unity instead of divisiveness.

Just as government can potentially break down civil society through certain actions, it can also break down civil society through inaction, and thus clear the field of forces in society that might otherwise serve as a counterweight to government tyranny.

Active Government; Active Communities: Implications for Public Policy

A high level of volunteerism in a society, and philanthropy in support of voluntary activity, is a goal worthy of encouragement. Voluntary agencies can provide unique services to people in need that could not be performed well through government bureaucracy. And volunteerism provides a display of willingness to help strangers, and an opportunity to educate people and sensitize them to the problems of others. Volunteerism can build tolerance, even a sense of unity, among people of vastly different backgrounds, build a sense of efficacy in people by teaching them that they can make a difference in the lives of others, and create organizational resources through which people can become effective checks on government action. Volunteerism can even provide a gateway into political activism for vast numbers of people. If we ought to use government to encourage greater volunteerism, what in particular, should we do?

First, we should reject the notion that government activism “crowds out” private initiative to help others, and thus also reject the reverse notion that the existence of a non-profit community and the potential for an outpouring of volunteers justifies cutting government benefits to people in need. Empirically, this notion is simply untrue: where and when there is greater government provision of public welfare, there is more, not less, charity. Instead, we should understand that greater levels of government attention to poverty and to the needs of people who are poor will tend to focus more people's attention on the problems and make more people feel that the problems are societal rather than individual in nature, and thus will lead more people to come out and help.

In addition, we should reject the idea that government can retreat from the

responsibility to provide adequate welfare and other public benefits and services and at the same time successfully manufacture an outpouring of voluntary effort by cheerleading for more volunteerism. The results of the most recent attempt to do this, the Volunteer Summit of 1997, are at best ambiguous. While survey data appears to indicate that record numbers of people are now volunteering, the depth of commitment to volunteerism appears to be shrinking, as the average number of hours that volunteers contribute continues to decline and, despite the increase in the number of people who report being volunteers, the overall number of hours contributed has remained unchanged over the past decade.

While the Summit and the formation of the organization America's Promise appears to have helped to induce a volunteerism fad, it seems as though large numbers of people are volunteering merely for the sake of volunteering, participating in shallow and periodic one-time events instead of making real and long-term commitments.

It is not enough for political leaders to speak compassionately; they must demonstrate compassion through policy. It is likely that more people will make a real commitment to volunteerism to help people in need if government leads by example rather than by mere words. Cutting welfare and justifying the cuts by arguing that welfare recipients tend to become long-term dependents on welfare and do not want to work hard to get out of poverty, that they have babies to get increased benefits, that their children are more likely to become welfare dependants, that many of them are cheaters, that welfare is costing taxpayers considerable sums in taxes--all myths or at least half-truths--is not a way to encourage the kind of compassion toward the poor that will lead to people wanting to help. In particular, as I have shown, identification with the poor as part of an extended "we" is

essential to an individual's wanting to volunteer to help, and the typical justifications for cutting welfare tend to encourage a perception of the poor as unlike the rest of us in a fundamental way which prevents many people from being able to identify with the poor. The best way government can encourage people to show compassion by volunteerism in human services is for government to itself display compassion.

Second, if we believe that volunteerism--not only in human services but in all areas--is an important value to encourage, and especially if we believe in strengthening civil society, we should take what may seem a radical step, especially in a time when we appear to be relatively close to full employment: reduce the length of the work week in America.

Some time ago, the typical middle class family in America included a working husband and a wife who stayed at home. Today, this family structure is rare, since two salaries are necessary to maintain what we today regard as an acceptable standard of living. As a result, the average couple has gone from working five days a week to working ten days a week. In addition, the average full-time worker is working longer hours than ever. In 1994, the average worker worked 1,740 hours, 26 more hours than in 1989.¹⁸⁰ Not only are people working longer hours; they are also living farther from their workplaces, spending more time commuting. In addition, whole new areas of activity, including the advent of new forms of media, are competing for the time and attention of individuals.

In the old days, the stereotypical volunteer was a housewife, who was able to

180 Economic Policy Institute Web Site, www.epinet.org

contribute large amounts of time and commitment to a volunteer assignment. Today, without stay-at-home family members, there is a shortage of highly committed volunteers, even at the same time that more people than ever report contributing some of their time to voluntary activities. Most volunteers who are not retirees or students are fitting volunteer activities into the small time slots they have available.

In America, many major problems are often attributed to failures in morality, which in part are said to result from parents who do not show enough responsibility to give adequate time and attention to their children. This was said after the mass murder at Columbine High School; where were the parents? Why couldn't they give enough attention to their children to understand what was going on with them?

So, as a more radical proposal than the first to increase voluntary activity, and address a number of other social problems as well, why not recommend a reduction in the work week, from five days a week to four? In the past, the Federal government has taken the first step in shortening the work week. In the 1840s, the government shortened the work week for government employees and for employees in companies seeking contracts from government, leading to a shortening of the work week throughout the country. In the 1930s, the Fair Labor Standards Act mandated the 40-hour work week for all employers.

On the surface, the year 2000, when unemployment is extraordinarily low, appears to be a questionable time for another reduction in the work week. However, the basic economic statistics do not tell the entire picture about employment. In 1997, 28.7 percent of American workers were in "non-standard" jobs--part-time temporary, self-employed, on-call, contractors and consultants. While "it is true that many workers prefer the

flexibility provided by some kinds of non-standard jobs, large numbers of workers feel compelled to accept these arrangements for economic and personal reasons beyond their control. Unfortunately, given current labor market policies, nonstandard employment has the potential to become a mechanism for providing substandard wages and benefits.”¹⁸¹ Between the underemployed and the people whom we are trying to move from welfare to work, there is a much greater demand for jobs than basic economic statistics would indicate.

Therefore, it would make sense to shorten the work week to four days a week, which would in actuality mean an eight-day work week for each working couple. An extra day a week for each worker could be used to spend more time with family, or to participate in a political cause, or to volunteer in direct human services, or whatever other purpose individuals choose. It would free up time to do any number of things that would actually strengthen our civil society.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study is not, and is not intended to be, a conclusive study about the relationship between government activism and private voluntary initiative. It is intended, instead, as simply a starting point for a new avenue of discussion on issues of public welfare, private philanthropy and volunteerism, and civil society. I have purposely not presented the world of welfare and volunteerism in full shape and color, but have resorted to some admittedly

181 Economic Policy Institute Briefing Paper: “No Shortage of Nonstandard Jobs,” *ibid.*

crude terms, such as describing government welfare efforts mainly in terms of "more" or "less," and attempted to express this in terms of dollar amounts spent, when a full picture of what government does would involve more sophisticated distinctions in terms of the strategies government uses. Presenting the issue of welfare in the sort of two-dimensional manner in which I have chosen is a heuristic device, a way of simplifying the issue as a starting point for further examination of the actual relationships I am studying. Adding more richness and color to the picture of what government does and what people do as private volunteers will be the work of future studies.

Indeed, the amount of money spent on social welfare--the prime measure of government attention to the problems of poverty which I have used--does not provide a complete picture of what government is actually doing. In addition, speaking of more or less government spending on social welfare as a measure of actual compassion is not completely fair to those who truly believe that cutting back on direct material assistance to the poor in favor of greater efforts to move people from welfare to work is a more compassionate strategy. Government action and private compassion cannot truly be measured on a spectrum from less to more, for these things can come in different shapes, as well as in different amounts. Also, in terms of studying the voluntary sector itself, the sample I have studied is certainly imperfect. The survey and interview sample was shaped in large part by the choice of organizations to participate or not--those that participated included many large, city-wide organizations, while most smaller, community-based organizations, especially ones in poorer communities, that were approached did not agree to participate. Finally, the survey was of non-profit organizations and volunteers in New York City, and

the people with whom I spoke and who were surveyed may not be representative of people in the voluntary community across the country. The strategy for gathering survey data was affected by certain constraints--especially financial constraints--on the survey's scope.

But again, I believe the value of this work is to raise some serious questions about commonly held assumptions about government and private action that have an impact on public policy, that actually cause public policy to be misguided. It is an introduction, a taking-off point, for what will hopefully be greater discussion of what was previously taken-for-granted and as provocation for future study building on what I have found. While my own findings are not absolutely conclusive, they at least provide significant and robust evidence that we need to question certain myths and assumptions we have about the relationship between governmental and private action, that volunteers are motivated by values and attitudes that can be susceptible to societal moods which political actors are capable of fostering through their words and their policy choices, that non-political voluntary action may serve more as a gateway to political advocacy instead of as an alternative to it, that voluntary action may actually be more salutary and beneficial to those who are served when it complements a social welfare state that provides comprehensive material assistance.

My hope is that, in challenging some conventional notions about the effects of government activism on private philanthropy and volunteerism, this study will provoke thought and plant a fertile field for further study. It is my hope that I, and other researchers, will follow up on this study in a number of ways:

1. *Comparison of Attitudes of Volunteers vs. Non-Volunteers.* Financial constraints limited the scope of the survey that was conducted for the present study. While I believe I learned some valuable information by surveying volunteers, more may be learned through a survey of a representative sample of the general population which could present the opportunity to compare people who report that they volunteer with those who report that they do not on a variety of attitudinal measures. While the Gallup Polls on volunteerism and philanthropy have done some work in this area, the main focus has been on characteristics of volunteers and non-volunteers, rather than on attitudes.

Such a study could tell us more about a number of issues. Do human services volunteers and non-volunteers differ in their perceptions of the causes of poverty, on the distribution of responsibility for addressing poverty, on whether the problem is social in nature or primarily individual in nature? Do volunteers in human services hold more sympathetic and empathetic attitudes about people who are in need? Do they identify more than do non-volunteers with those who are in need? Do these groups differ in the amount or type of action they believe government should take to deal with poverty? Are volunteers more likely than non-volunteers to view volunteerism and philanthropy as substitutes for, or as an adjunct to, government action?

We can learn from this whether it is true that volunteers are people who are better able than non-volunteers to identify with the poor. If this is a fundamental difference between people who volunteer and people who do not, then we might have even greater reason to believe that government policies and rhetoric that encourage a sense that those who are poor are just like the rest of us are likely to encourage more people to internalize the

attitudes that lead to volunteerism. Similarly, if we can confirm that the perception that problems are social in nature is a prerequisite for being a volunteer, then we might be able to state more assuredly that government action that communicates that a problem is social in nature will encourage greater volunteerism as well.

2. Direct Services Volunteerism As A Gateway to Political Activism. Critics of charity and of direct-service volunteerism argue that the focus on this sort of activity distracts people from the types of voluntary action that would actually solve the problems that face the individuals they are trying to help through direct service. That is, people are encouraged to participate in non-political activism to help one person at a time at the expense of participation in political activism to address the real root causes of their suffering—they are encouraged to save the people drowning in the proverbial river instead of going to the bridge where they are being pushed off.

I disagree. Based on my survey of volunteers and interviews with volunteer program administrators, I contend that volunteerism in direct service for with people suffering because of a larger problem educates people as to the realities, makes them more sensitive and sympathetic, and motivates them to move on to larger and more political types of action. This is evident in the result from my survey that those respondents who had been volunteers for longer periods of time, especially in one particular voluntary assignment with one particular set of clientele, are more likely than are newer volunteers to believe government should play the primary role in addressing the problems their clientele face, and are much less likely to attribute the problems to personal shortcomings in the individuals they are

helping. My conclusion is that, before a person can understand that people are being pushed off the bridge, they need to see the people drowning in the river, and in order to resolve to do something about what is happening on the bridge, they must build some connection with those victims.

To confirm this notion, more in-depth study needs to be done on direct services volunteerism as a gateway to political activism or volunteerism. Incisive studies of political activists have been done, such as Sidney Verba and his colleagues' book, *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics*. However, none have been done that focus on non-political and political volunteerism.

The current study should be followed up with just such a study. A survey of volunteers and non-volunteers in human services to see which are more likely to become politically active would be valuable. But even more valuable would be more of a biographical study--interviews with a large sample of individuals involved in political activism to learn about their backgrounds, which I suspect may very frequently involve non-political volunteerism.

3. *The Impact of Welfare Reform on the Voluntary Community*. Studying the effects of welfare reform on the voluntary community in a city (or several cities) could teach us a great deal more about relationships between governmental and voluntary action.

For example, we could learn whether more people are coming out, as contributors and as volunteers, to help people for whom government support and services have been reduced. We could learn whether more voluntary effort is being put into programs to help

people understand what they are entitled to and/or to help them obtain it, or whether people are being inspired by government's emphasis on moving people from welfare to work and are volunteering in programs to help prepare people on welfare to find and hold jobs. Or, perhaps, in a time when government is cutting back services to the poor, it may be simply drawing attention away from the problems of poverty or hiding or denying the problem, or setting an example of non-sympathy that may or not be reflected by drops in the number of people encouraged to come out and help on their own.

We could also learn whether resources in the non-profit community are being redirected toward programs to compensate for cutbacks, or to programs that are consistent with the welfare to work strategy. By performing a case study in a community, we can learn about some of the complexities of voluntary sector or charitable response to changes in government's approach. For example, an increase in the number of people who are homeless and hungry occurred in the early 1980s, when there were deep cutbacks in Federal government services to the poor. In New York City, there was a huge increase in the number of soup kitchens, but, as I learned from one administrator, one reason more soup kitchens emerged was that the New York City government reached out to local churches and synagogues and non-religious institutions to establish soup kitchens, and assisted in them in some cases with seed money and other material assistance.

There is a great deal more to learn about the relationship between government activism on social welfare and private volunteerism in social welfare causes. Greater knowledge will be helpful to our society on a number of levels. To some extent, cutbacks

in government welfare are justified by the idea that there are thousands and thousands of people who would provide money to establish new private social welfare organizations, and that there are hundreds of thousands of potential volunteers to work in these organizations, and that these people would come out if only they were not sitting back expecting government to do the work. But because this assumption is highly questionable, government welfare reductions may fail to produce such an outpouring of help, with tragic consequences. Moreover, government inattention to the problems of property, and political rhetoric blaming or castigating the poor for their own problems may even dampen people's willingness to volunteer to help the poor, and thus actually reduce volunteerism. And, to the extent that volunteerism and philanthropy are important aspects of a healthy and vigorous civil society, and to the extent that civil society is an essential part of a well-working democracy, this would mean that government non-involvement on important societal problems, and political rhetoric that says that these problems are not the responsibility of Americans collectively, will not strengthen civil society by providing space for it to grow. It will instead cause the vigor of civil society in our country to diminish to the extent that people are persuaded that it is okay to turn their backs on problems that are affecting millions of us and, as we become less willing to get personally involved, drive us further apart from each other.

We therefore need to understand more about the effect of governments' actions on our civic mood, and to make this effect an important consideration in the design of public policy.

APPENDIX

SURVEY OF VOLUNTEERS

Your responses to this survey will be extremely helpful to a study of volunteerism in New York City, being conducted by a doctoral student at the City University of New York . Your answers will be kept anonymous and confidential. Please do not give your name.

I. INFORMATION ON VOLUNTEER INTERESTS

1. What is the name of the organization with which you are volunteering?

2. What do you do as a volunteer?

3. Which of the following describe the field in which you volunteer (check as many as apply)?

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----|---|-----|
| <i>Helping the poor</i> | [] | <i>Community improvement</i> | [] |
| <i>Helping homeless people</i> | [] | <i>Helping children</i> | [] |
| <i>Helping battered women</i> | [] | <i>Helping teens</i> | [] |
| <i>Education</i> | [] | <i>Helping people with disabilities</i> | [] |
| <i>Helping people with AIDS</i> | [] | <i>Helping senior citizens</i> | [] |
| <i>Protecting the environment</i> | [] | | |
| <i>Arts-Culture</i> | [] | <i>Other</i> _____ | |

4. Was there anything you read or heard that helped you decide to volunteer? Yes [] No []
 If yes, do you remember where you read or heard this, and what was stated? _____

5. Why did you decide to volunteer? _____

6. To what extent is each of the following a motivation for your desire to volunteer? (Please circle one: 5= "very much," 4= "a good deal," 3= "somewhat," 2= "a little," 1 = "not at all.")

- | | |
|--|-------------------|
| <i>I want to help people one at a time</i> | 5 - 4 - 3 - 2 - 1 |
| <i>Government isn't doing enough about certain problems</i> | 5 - 4 - 3 - 2 - 1 |
| <i>I'd like to make the city a better place</i> | 5 - 4 - 3 - 2 - 1 |
| <i>I want to feel a sense of personal fulfillment or accomplishment</i> | 5 - 4 - 3 - 2 - 1 |
| <i>It may lead to a job</i> | 5 - 4 - 3 - 2 - 1 |
| <i>It gives me a chance to make friends</i> | 5 - 4 - 3 - 2 - 1 |
| <i>I want to stay active</i> | 5 - 4 - 3 - 2 - 1 |
| <i>I may meet people who can help me in my career</i> | 5 - 4 - 3 - 2 - 1 |
| <i>Government is already trying to address the issue, and I want to "pitch in"</i> | 5 - 4 - 3 - 2 - 1 |
| <i>Volunteerism is a value I learned from my family</i> | 5 - 4 - 3 - 2 - 1 |
| <i>I want to help people who share a common characteristic or background with me</i> | 5 - 4 - 3 - 2 - 1 |
| <i>I want to learn/sharpen some skills</i> | 5 - 4 - 3 - 2 - 1 |

- I was encouraged to get involved by actions being taken by government* 5 - 4 - 3 - 2 - 1
- I was encouraged by my religious institution to get involved* 5 - 4 - 3 - 2 - 1
- I was encouraged by my union to get involved* 5 - 4 - 3 - 2 - 1
- I was encouraged by my company/employer* 5 - 4 - 3 - 2 - 1
- I was encouraged by peers or friends* 5 - 4 - 3 - 2 - 1
- I was encouraged by some other organization to get involved* 5 - 4 - 3 - 2 - 1
(specify organization) _____
- Other* _____ 5 - 4 - 3 - 2 - 1

7. Do you currently do other volunteer work? Yes [] No [] (If "no", please skip to question #10.)

8. If "yes," with what organization[s] do you volunteer? _____

9. What do you do for this organization [these organizations]? _____

10. In total, how many hours a week would you estimate you volunteer? _____

11. Have you worked as a volunteer in the past? Yes [] No [] (If "no", please skip to question #14.)

12. If "yes," please describe what you did _____

13. Why did you stop? _____

14. How long have you been a volunteer? _____

15. Are there any factors that kept you from getting involved as a volunteer in the past?

16. How did you learn about the specific issues[s] which you seek to address through your volunteerism?

17. What has the government done to call attention to the issues you would like to help solve through your volunteer efforts (check as many as apply)?

- Created a government program to address the issue? []
- Encouraged volunteerism to address the issue? []
- Failed to adequately address the issue? []
- Cut back programs to address the issue? []

Other _____

18. What is your opinion of the response of government agencies to the issues you are trying to address as a volunteer?

On the following questions, please check one of the following: SA (strongly agree), A (Agree) D (disagree); SD (Strongly Disagree), or N (No Opinion):

19. I'd be *less* likely to volunteer if government were doing *more* to address the issues I am concerned about. SA [] A [] D [] SD [] N []

20. I'd be *less* likely to volunteer if government were doing *less* to address the issues I am concerned about. SA [] A [] D [] SD [] N []

21. The issues I try to address as a volunteer are social problems, which should be addressed primarily by government. SA [] A [] D [] SD [] N []

22. The issues I try to address as a volunteer are individual problems, which should be addressed by personal improvements on the part of those who are suffering. SA [] A [] D [] SD [] N []

23. The issues I work on are social problems, which people should get together to solve. SA [] A [] D [] SD [] N []

24. The issues I work on would be better addressed by government than through volunteerism. SA [] A [] D [] SD [] N []

25. If government were more involved in the issues I work on, my voluntary involvement would be less needed. SA [] A [] D [] SD [] N []

With which of the following statements would you agree:

26. I noticed this issue because I saw signs about programs to address it.
Yes [] No [] Not sure []

27. I learned about this issue from a newspaper, television, or radio advertisement Yes [] No [] Not sure []

28. I learned about this issue because of the existence of a government program Yes [] No [] Not sure []

29. I learned about this issue because a public official spoke about it Yes [] No [] Not sure []

30. I learned about this issue from a friend, neighbor, or relative Yes [] No [] Not sure []

31. I learned about this issue from personal experience Yes [] No [] Not sure []

II. BACKGROUND

Age _____ Gender: Male Female

Race: African American Asian American Hispanic White (non-Hispanic)
 Mixed race Other

Occupation _____

If retired, former occupation: _____

Annual Household Income (check one):

Under \$10,000	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$50,000 - \$75,000	<input type="checkbox"/>
\$10,000 - \$20,000	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$75,000 - \$100,000	<input type="checkbox"/>
\$20,000 - \$30,000	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$100,000 - \$200,000	<input type="checkbox"/>
\$30,000 - \$40,000	<input type="checkbox"/>	Over \$200,000	<input type="checkbox"/>
\$40,000 - \$50,000	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Level of education (check one):

Did not complete high school	<input type="checkbox"/>	College graduate	<input type="checkbox"/>
High school graduate	<input type="checkbox"/>	Completed graduate school	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some college	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other _____	

Religion (check one):

Protestant Catholic Jewish Muslim Other _____

Citizenship

Were you born in the United States? Yes No
 Are you a U.S. Citizen? Yes No

Political party affiliation: Democrat Republican Independent Other _____

How would you describe your politics? Conservative Moderate Liberal

Other _____

MANY THANKS FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!!!

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